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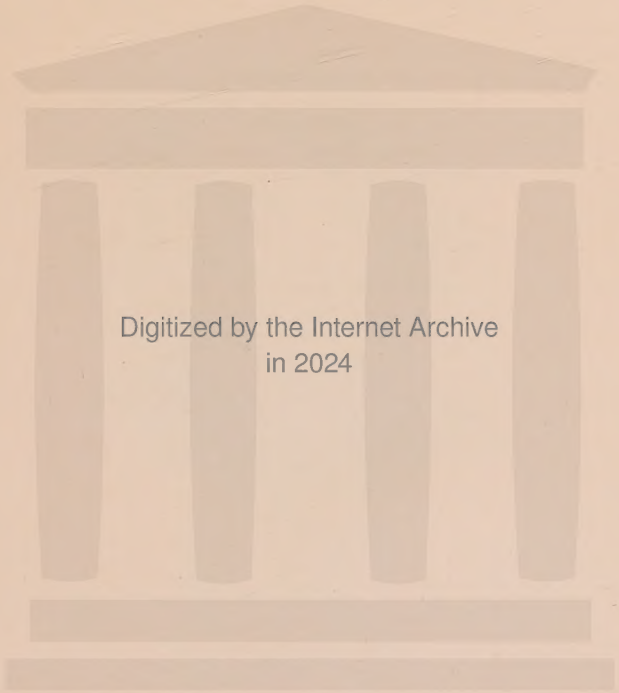
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Lucy Larcom

THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

LUCY LARCOM

Household Edition

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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EARLIER POEMS.

HANNAH BINDING SHOES.

Poor lone Hannah,
Sitting at the window, binding shoes:
Faded, wrinkled,
Sitting, stitching, in a mournful muse.
Bright-eyed beauty once was she,
When the bloom was on the tree:
Spring and winter,
Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.

Not a neighbor,
Passing nod or answer will refuse,
To her whisper,
"Is there from the fishers any news?"
Oh, her heart's adrift, with one
On an endless voyage gone!
Night and morning,
Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.

Fair young Hannah,
Ben, the sunburnt fisher, gayly wooes:
Hale and clever,
For a willing heart and hand he sues.
May-day skies are all aglow,
And the waves are laughing so!
For her wedding
Hannah leaves her window and her shoes.

May is passing:
Mid the apple boughs a pigeon cooes.
Hannah shudders,
For the mild southwester mischief brews.
Round the rocks of Marblehead,
Outward bound, a schooner sped:
Silent, lonesome,
Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.

'T is November,
Now no tear her wasted cheek bedews.
From Newfoundland
Not a sail returning will she lose,
Whispering hoarsely, "Fishermen,
Have you, have you heard of Ben?"
Old with watching,
Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.

Twenty winters
Bleach and tear the ragged shore she views.
Twenty seasons: —
Never one has brought her any news.
Still her dim eyes silently
Chase the white sails o'er the sea:
Hopeless, faithful,
Hannah's at the window, binding shoes.

SKIPPER BEN.

SAILING away!
Losing the breath of the shores in May,
Dropping down from the beautiful bay,
Over the sea-slope vast and gray!
And the skipper's eyes with a mist are blind;
For a vision comes on the rising wind,
Of a gentle face that he leaves behind,
And a heart that throbs through the fog-bank dim,
Thinking of him.

Far into night,
He watches the gleam of the lessening light
Fixed on the dangerous island height,
That bars the harbor he loves from sight:
And he wishes, at dawn, he could tell the tale
Of how they had weathered the southwest gale,
To brighten the cheek that had grown so pale
With a wakeful night among spectres grim, —
Terrors for him.

Yo-heave-yo!
Here's the Bank where the fishermen go.
Over the schooner's sides they throw
Tackle and bait to the deeps below.
And Skipper Ben in the water sees,
When its ripples curl to the light land breeze,
Something that stirs like his apple-trees,
And two soft eyes that beneath them swim,
Lifted to him.

Hear the wind roar,
And the rain through the slit sails tear and pour!
"Steady! we'll scud by the Cape Ann shore,
Then hark to the Beverly bells once more!"
And each man worked with the will of ten;
While up in the rigging, now and then,
The lightning glared in the face of Ben,
Turned to the black horizon's rim,
Scowling on him.

Into his brain
Burned with the iron of hopeless pain,
Into thoughts that grapple, and eyes that strain,
Pierces the memory, cruel and vain!
Never again shall he walk at ease,
Under his blossoming apple-trees,
That whisper and sway to the sunset breeze,
While the soft eyes float where the sea-gulls skim,
Gazing with him.

How they went down
Never was known in the still old town:
Nobody guessed how the fisherman brown,
With the look of despair that was half a frown,
Faced his fate in the furious night,
Faced the mad billows with hunger white,
Just within hail of the beacon-light
That shone on a woman sweet and trim,
Waiting for him.

Beverly bells,
Ring to the tide as it ebbs and swells!
His was the anguish a moment tells,—
The passionate sorrow death quickly knells.
But the wearing wash of a lifelong woe
Is left for the desolate heart to know,
Whose tides with the dull years come and go,
Till hope drifts dead to its stagnant brim,
Thinking of him.

HILARY.

"HILARY!"
Summer calls, across the sea!
Like white flowers upon the tide,
In and out the vessels glide;
But no wind on all the main
Sends thy blithe soul home again:
Every salt breeze moans for thee,
Hilary!

Hilary,
Welcome Summer's step will be,
Save to those beside whose door
Doleful birds sit evermore
Singing, "Never comes he here,
Who made every season's cheer:"
Dull the June that brings not thee,
Hilary!

Hilary,
What strange world has sheltered thee?
Here the soil beneath thy feet
Rang with songs, and blossomed sweet:
Still the blue skies ask of Earth,
Blind and dumb without thy mirth,
Where she hides thy heart of glee,
Hilary!

Hilary,
All things shape a sigh for thee!
Over waves, and fields, and flowers,
Through the lapse of odorous hours,
Breathes a lonely, longing sound,
As of something sought, unfound:
Lorn are all things; lorn are we,
Hilary!

Hilary!
Oh, to sail in quest of thee,
On the trade-wind's steady tune,
On the hurrying monsoon,
Far through torrid seas, that lave
Dry, hot sands, a breathless grave.—
Sad as vain the search would be,
Hilary!

Hilary,
Chase the sorrow from the sea!
Summer-heart, bring summer near,
Warm, and fresh, and airy-clear!
Dead thou art not! dead is pain;
Now Earth sees and sings again,
Death, to hold thee, Life must be,
Hilary!

ON THE BEACH.

We stroll as children, thou and I,
Upon the echoing beach,
With younger children playing nigh;
The surf-boats dance, the ships go by,
Beyond the Cape's vague reach.

It is a comfort once to be
  Like those young hearts again;
To feel, O friend beloved, with thee,
The broad refreshment of the sea,
  In weary soul and brain.

The white feet pattering on the sand,
  The wings that dip and rise,
The mower's whistle from the land,
And girlhood's laugh, and murmuring strand,
  All blend and harmonize.

And glimmering beach, and plover's flight,
  And that long surge that rolls
Through bands of green and purple light,
Are fairer to our human sight,
  Because of human souls.

Seest thou yon fleet of anchored isles
  Upon the sea-line gray?
My thoughts o'erfloat those murmurous miles,
To land where bygone summer smiles
  On gorge and sheltering bay.

I wander with a spirit there,
  Along the enchanted shore:
We breathe the soft, sea-scented air,
And think no isle is half so fair
  As rocky Appledore.

She turns to me her large, dark eyes:
  Were ever eyes so true?
The twilight flushes, fades, and dies;
The beacon flames; the white stars rise
  Across pale gulfs of blue.

Those eyes on earth no longer shine;
  And yet it seems to me
I see their light, O friend, in thine;
They add a tenderness divine
  Unto this tremulous sea.

Seen and unseen are interblent;
  The waves that hither roll
In whiter curves of foam are spent,
And deeper seems the green content
  Of earth, for her sweet soul.

Love is not smouldering in the urn,
  Nor crumbling in the grave:
Life passes, only to return,
In tints that glow, and stars that burn
  Upon the refluent wave.

The land is dearer for the sea,
The ocean for the shore:
These sands of time too drear would be,
If heaven's unguessed eternity
Rolled not our feet before.

A SEA GLIMPSE.

High tide, and the year at ebb:
The sea is a dream to-day:
The sky is a gossamer web
Of sapphire, and pearl, and gray:

A veil over rock and boat;
A breath on the tremulous blue,
Where the dim sails lie afloat,
Or, unaware, slip from view.

They veer to the rosy ray;
They dusk to the violet shade;
Like a thought they flit away;
Like a foolish hope, they fade.

But listen! a sudden plash!
A ship is heaving in sight,
With a stir, and a noisy dash
Of the salt foam, seething white.

Tar-grimed and weather-stained,
The sailors shout from her deck:
Naught of the sky blue-veined,
Or the dreamy waves they reck.

And the sunburnt girl, who stands
Where her feet on the wet wrack slip,—
Eyes shaded with lithe, brown hands,—
She sees but the coming ship.

PEGGY BLIGH'S VOYAGE.

You may ride in an hour or two, if you will,
From Halibut Point to Beacon Hill,
With the sea beside you all the way,
Through pleasant places that skirt the Bay;
By Gloucester Harbor and Beverly Beach,
Salem's old steeples, Nahant's long reach,
Blue-bordered Swampscott, and Chelsea's wide
Marshes, laid bare to the drenching tide,

"Nahant's long reach." Page 6.

With a glimpse of Saugus spire in the west,
And Malden hills in their dreamy rest.

All this you watch idly, and more by far,
From the cushioned seat of a railway-car.
But in days of witchcraft it was not so;
City-bound travellers had to go
Horseback over a blind, rough road,
Or as part of a jolting wagon-load
Of garden produce and household goods,
Crossing the fords, half lost in the woods,
By the fear of redskins haunted all day,
And the roar of lions, some histories say.

If ever for Boston a craft set sail,
Few to secure a passage would fail,
Who had errands to do in the three-hilled town:
And they *might* return ere the sun went down.
So, one breezy midsummer dawn,
Skipper Nash, of the schooner Fawn,
Sails away with a crowded deck: —
One of his passengers cranes her neck
Out of her scarlet cloak, — an eye
Like a smouldering coal had Peggy Bligh, —
And looks at her townsmen, looks at the sea,
At the crew and the skipper; what can it be
That hinders their flinging her bold glance back?
Many a wife has an eye as black,
And a cloak as scarlet. Ay, but she —
Nobody covets her company!
Nobody meets that strange look of hers,
But a nameless terror within him stirs;
His nerves and his heart-strings eerily twitch;
'T is an evil eye, — it will blight and bewitch.

Afraid to be silent, afraid to speak,
The crew and the skipper, with half-oaths weak,
Looked up dismayed when aboard she came.
And the voyagers whispered around her name,
And gazed askance, as apart she stood,
Eying them under her scarlet hood.

A fair wind wafted them down the Bay;
By noon at the Boston wharves they lay.
"We shall sail at three!" the skipper cried;
Save Peggy, all were aware that he lied;
For along the deck had been passed a word
Which only speaker and listener heard, —
How he meant to give the old crone the slip
By an hour or so, on the homeward trip.

Errands all finished, and anchor weighed,
Out of the harbor her way she made —

The schooner Fawn. But who hastens down
To the water-side, with a shout and a frown,
Angrily stamps with her high-heeled shoe,
Audibly curses both skipper and crew,
Flutters her cloak and flames with her eye?
Who but the witch-woman, old Peg Bligh?

"We'll give her the go-by!" says Skipper Nash,
And laughs at his schooner's scurry and dash;
But here and there one muttered, "He's rash!"
"As good right has Peggy," said one or two,
"To a homeward passage as I or you;
For what has the poor old beldam done
That any man could lay finger on,
Worse than living alone in a tumble-down hut,
And freeing her mind when she chose to? But" —
The speaker stopped, to follow the stare
Of his listeners up through the windy air.

A monstrous gull bore down on the blast!
Once it poised on the schooner's mast;
Once it flapped in the skipper's face;
Scarcely it veered for a moment's space
From the prow's white track in the seething brine;
Its sharp eye gleamed with a steel-cold shine,
And one of the sailors averred that he saw
A red strip dangle from beak and claw;
While all the voyagers shrank with fear
To see that wild creature a-swoop so near.

As they hove in sight of Salem town
A fog came up, and the breeze went down.
They could almost hear the farm-folk speak,
And smell the magnolias at Jeffrey's Creek.
Abreast of the Half-way Rock once more,
With the Misery Islands just off shore,
The gull gave a shriek, and flew out of sight,
And — there they lay in the fog all night.

They dared not stir until morn was red,
And the sky showed a blue streak overhead;
Then glad on the clear wave sped the Fawn
Homeward again through a breezy dawn,
And the skipper shouted, "The vessel arrives
In season for breakfast with your wives!"

But some one else had arrived before: —
Who is that, by the hut on the shore,
Milking her cow with indifferent mien,
As if boat nor sailor were yet to be seen?
By the side glance out of her keen black eye,
It must be — surely it is — Peg Bligh!

How she got there no mortal could tell,
But crew and passengers knew right well
That she had not set foot upon deck or hull;
"Nor the mast?" About that you may ask the gull.

Well, the story goes on to say
That Skipper Nash always rued the day
When he left old Peg on the wharf behind,
With her shrill cry drifting along the wind:
For he lost his schooner, his children died,
And his wife; and his cattle and sheep, beside;
And his old age found him alone, forlorn,
Wishing, no doubt, he had never been born.

What Peggy Bligh had to do with his case
It is hard to see, in our time and place.
We might have had our delusions, though,
Had we lived here two hundred years ago,
When the thoughts of men took a weirder shape
Than any mist that hangs round the Cape.
And this moral 's a good one for all to mind: —
His own heart is the curse of a man unkind.

THE LIGHT-HOUSES.

BAKER'S ISLAND, OFF BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS.

Two pale sisters, all alone,
On an island bleak and bare,
Listening to the breakers' moan,
Shivering in the chilly air;
Looking inland towards a hill,
On whose top one aged tree
Wrestles with the storm-wind's will,
Rushing, wrathful, from the sea.

Two dim ghosts at dusk they seem,
Side by side, so white and tall,
Sending one long, hopeless gleam
Down the horizon's darkened wall:
Spectres, strayed from plank or spar,
With a tale none lives to tell,
Gazing at the town afar,
Where unconscious widows dwell.

Two white angels of the sea,
Guiding wave-worn wanderers home!
Sentinels of hope are ye,
Drenched with sleet, and dashed with foam,
Standing there in loneliness,
Fireside joys for men to keep;

Through the midnight slumberless
That the quiet shore may sleep!

Two bright eyes awake all night
To the fierce moods of the sea;
Eyes that only close when light
Dawns on lonely hill and tree!
O kind watchers! teach us, too,
Steadfast courage, sufferance long!
Where an eye is turned to you,
Should a human heart grow strong.

BITTERSWEET SHADOWS.

Off we drifted, yesterday,
Till the sea-foam dashed the spray
Of the woodland bittersweet,
Leaning from a sunlit cove
Where amid salt winds it throve,
Swaying to the tide's low beat.

Oh, the afternoon was fair!
Murmurous echoes swept the air, —
Sigh of pines, and dip of oar:
Every breeze that passed us, went
Laden with some rare wood-scent,
Loitering down the dreamy shore.

And we lingered, loitering too,
Where the heavy cedars threw
Shadows on the water's gold;
Till again in glee afloat,
Like a bird our idle boat
Skimmed the wavelets manifold.

Then, the crystal channel won,
In its deep the shallop shone,
Sails of silver, prow of pearl:
Hidden ledges brake that dream,
Sucking down the flash and gleam
Underneath their high-tide swirl.

Free again, broad sunshine found,
Slid the boat on, greenly wound
With its veil of bittersweet,
Tangling round the sunk rock's edge,
Catching streamers of sea-sedge
From the sheen beneath our feet.

Anchored in the dusk, a spell
From the folds of twilight fell
  On the bay's black, star-strewn floor:
Awe with that weird glitter crept
Shuddering through our thoughts; we stept
  Gladly on firm land once more,

Trailing home the bittersweet:
Such dim ending was but meet
  For an afternoon so rare.
Was the date of yesterday?
Years since then have slipt away;
  Few such memories they bear.

No to-days like that remain:
Joy is flavored now with pain;
  For the best of all our crew, —
Helmsman, gentlest passenger, —
Lie so still they will not stir,
  Though the sea should drench them through.

So our shallop floats no more
Where the low, vine-tangled shore
  Dips its orange-golden fruit
To the plashing of the wave:
Only white flowers for a grave,
  Now our serious hands will suit.

Still the sun shines, and we drift
Homeward on the current swift,
  Those who went before to meet.
All things beautiful grow sad:
Yet even grief is sometimes glad; —
  Shade us, Life, with bittersweet!

THE LEGEND OF SKADI.

THROUGH the leaves of the Edda there rustles a tale
Of Skadi, the daughter of torrent and gale,
Who, leaving her snow-summits, breezy and free,
Went down to be wedded to Njörd of the sea.

Though bright was the ocean as now, in the day
When Vanir and Æsir held nature in sway,
Of gods though her bridegroom was reckoned the third,
In Skadi's new mansion a murmur was heard.

"O Njörd, I am homesick! the gull's tiresome note,
The moan of the breakers, the tide's endless rote,

They hold my eyes sleepless; I never can stay
By the wide-staring ocean. Come, let us away!

"Away to my mountains, my home in the height,
To the glens and the gorges, the summits of light!"
And Njörd could but listen, and go with his bride;
But there for his sea-haunts he drearily sighed.

"O Skadi, come back to the warm, sunny surf!
The beach-sand is smoother than frost-bitten turf;
I like not, at midnight, the wolf's hungry howl,
The bear's stealthy footstep, the shriek of the owl.

"Nine sunsets, my Skadi, from sole love of thee,
I will give to the mountains, if only for three
With me thou wilt linger the blue wave beside;
The billows shall lull thee, my wild one, my bride!"

Then down the steep gorges went Skadi and Njörd;
Like wind through the pine-woods they swept to the fiord;
And back in three mornings they hurried again,
Bearing up to the hill-tops the sigh of the main.

So hither and thither awhile swayed the pair:
But Njörd sickened soon of the fresh inland air;
And once, as he scented afar the salt sea,
"No more of the mountains," he shouted, "for me!"

"I am nine times too weary of cavern and cliff;
All the pine-groves of Norway I 'd give for my skiff.
The twilight, that buries the white, solemn hills,
My blood like the coming of Ragnarök chills."

"Three days and three nights are too many for me
To waste on the ocean, O dull Njörd, and thee!"—
And Skadi has buckled her snow-sandals on,
And back to her mountains alone she has gone.

The red, climbing sunrise, the rosy-fringed mist,
Stealing up from the valley, her clear cheek have kissed;
And over the hill-tops the frosty blue sky
With the joy of its welcome rekindles her eye.

She tightens her bowstring, she bounds from the rock;
The elves in their caverns her merry voice mock;
The waterfall's rush to the tarn by the crag,
And the leap of the reindeer, behind her both lag.

But still, as she chases the wolf and the boar,
By sounds she is startled, like surf on the shore,
That surge through the forest, and whisper, and rave;—
'T is Njörd, who is calling her back to the wave.

And Njörd hears a hill-note borne in on the tide,
When soft through the sunset the lazy waves glide,
Or tranced in the moonlight the weird water shines; —
'T is Skadi, whose singing floats down from her pines.

He calls, but she leaves not her rock-ranges free;
She chants from her woodlands, he stays by the sea:
A wail thrills the harp-strings of heart lost to heart,
Neither happy together, nor joyous apart.

Of sea-god and hill-maid remains not a sign,
Save the marriage of music in billow and pine:
Still sound the Norse mountains, the tide in the fiord
With the singing of Skadi, the echo of Njörd.

THE OLD SCHOOL-HOUSE.

I PASSED it yesterday again,
The school-house by the river,
Where you and I were children, Jane,
And used to glow and shiver
In heats of June, December's frost;
And where, in rainy weather,
The swollen roadside brook we crossed
So many times together.

I felt the trickle of the rain
From your wet ringlets dripping;
I caught your blue eye's twinkle, Jane,
When we were nearly slipping;
And thought, while you in fear and glee
Were clinging to my shoulder,
"Oh, will she trust herself to me,
When we are ten years older?"

For I was full of visions vain,
The boy's romantic hunger:
You were the whole school's darling, Jane,
And many summers younger.
Your head a cherub's used to look,
With sunbeams on it lying,
Bent downward to your spelling-book,
For long and hard words prying.

The mountains through the window-pane
Showered over you their glory:
The awkward farm-boy loved you, Jane:
You know the old, old story.
I never watch the sunset now
Upon those misty ranges,

But your bright lips, and cheek, and brow,
Gleam out of all its changes.

I wonder if you see that chain
On memory's dim horizon;
There 's not a lovelier picture, Jane,
To rest even your sweet eyes on:
The Haystacks each an airy tent,
The Notch a gate of splendor;
And river, sky, and mountains blent
In twilight radiance tender.

I wonder, with a flitting pain,
If thoughts of me returning,
Are mingled with the mountains, Jane:
I stifle down that yearning. —
A rich man's wife, on you no claim
Have I, lost dreams to rally;
Yet Pemigewasset sings your name
Along its winding valley:

And once I hoped that for us twain
Might fall one calm life-closing;
That Campton hills might guard us, Jane,
In one green grave reposing.
They say the old man's heart is rock:
You never thought so, never!
And, loving you alone, I lock
The school-house door forever!

ELSIE IN ILLINOIS.

[LOOKING-GLASS PRAIRIE.]

"HOME is home, no matter where!"
Sang a happy, youthful pair,
Journeying westward, years ago,
As they left the April snow
White on Massachusetts' shore;
Left the sea's incessant roar;
Left the Adirondacks, piled
Like the playthings of a child,
On the horizon's eastern bound;
And, the unbroken forests found,
Heard Niagara's sullen call
Hurrying to his headlong fall,
Like a Titan in distress,
Tearing through the wilderness,
Rending earth apart, in hate
Of the unpitying hounds of fate.

Over Erie's green expanse
Inland wild-fowl weave their dance:
Lakes on lakes, a crystal chain,
Give the clear heaven back again;—
Wampum strung by Manitou,
Lightly as the beaded dew.

Is it wave, or is it shore?—
Gleams the widening prairie-floor,
West and south, one emerald;
Earth untenanted, unwalled.
Broad and level, without bound,
Spreads the green savanna round,
Flecked by wavering clouds that pass,
Mirrored in its sea of glass.

Bringing comfort unawares
Out of little daily cares,
Here has Elsie lived a year,
Learning well that home is dear,
By the vastness measureless
Of the outside wilderness,
So unshadowed, so immense!
Garden without path or fence,
Rolling up its billowy bloom
To her low, one-windowed room.

Breath of prairie-flowers is sweet;
But the baby at her feet
Is the sweetest bud to her,
Keeping such a pleasant stir,
On the cabin hearth at play,
While his father turns the hay,
Loads the grain, or binds the stack,
Until sunset brings him back.

Elsie's thoughts awake must keep,
While the baby lies asleep.
Far Niagara haunts her ears;
Mississippi's rush she hears;
Ancient nurses twain, that croon
For her babe their mighty tune,
Lapped upon the prairies wild:
He will be a wondrous child!

Ah! but Elsie's thoughts will stray
Where, a child, she used to play
In the shadow of the pines:
Moss and scarlet-berried vines
Carpeted the granite ledge,
Sloping to the brooklet's edge,

Sweet with violets, blue and white;
While the dandelions, bright
As if Night had spilt her stars,
Shone beneath the meadow-bars.

Could she hold her babe, to look
In that merry, babbling brook, —
See it picturing his eye,
As the violet's blue and shy, —
See his dimpled fingers creep
Where the sweet-breathed May-flowers peep
With pale pink anemones,
Out among the budding trees! —
On his soft cheek falls a tear
For the hill-side home so dear.

At her household work she dreams;
And the endless prairie seems
Like a broad, unmeaning face
Read through in a moment's space,
Where the smile so fixed is grown,
Better you would like a frown.

Elsie sighs, "We learn too late,
Little things are more than great.
Hearts like ours must daily be
Fed with some kind mystery,
Hidden in a rocky nook,
Whispered from a wayside brook,
Flashed on unexpecting eyes,
In a winged, swift surprise:
Small the pleasure is to trace
One continuous commonplace."

But the south wind, stealing in,
Her to happier moods will win.
In and out the little gate
Creep wild roses delicate:
Fragrant grasses hint a tale
Of the blossomed intervale
Left behind, among the hills.
Every flower-cup mystery fills;
Every idle breeze goes by,
Burdened with life's blissful sigh.

Elsie hums a thoughtful air;
Spreads the table, sets a chair
Where her husband first shall see
Baby laughing on her knee;
While she watches him afar,
Coming with the evening star
Through the prairie, through the sky, —
Each as from eternity.

MY MOUNTAIN.

I SHUT my eyes in the snow-fall
  And dream a dream of the hills:
The sweep of a host of mountains,
  The flash of a hundred rills;

For a moment they crowd my vision;
  Then, moving in troops along,
They leave me one still mountain-picture,
  The murmur of one river's song.

'T is the musical Pemigewasset,
  That sings to the hemlock-trees
Of the pines on the Profile Mountain,
  Of the stony Face that sees,

Far down in the vast rock-hollows
  The waterfall of the Flume,
The blithe cascade of the Basin,
  And the deep Pool's lonely gloom.

All night, from the cottage-window
  I can hear the river's tune;
But the hushed air gives no answer
  Save the hemlocks' sullen rune.

A lamb's bleat breaks through the stillness,
  And into the heart of night. —
Afar and around, the mountains,
  Veiled watchers, expect the light.

Then up comes the radiant morning
  To smile on their vigils grand.
Still muffled in cloudy mantles
  Do their stately ranges stand?

It is not the lofty Haystacks
  Piled up by the great Notch-Gate,
Nor the glow of the Cannon Mountain,
  That the Dawn and I await,

To loom out of northern vapors;
  But a shadow, a pencilled line,
That grows to an edge of opal
  Where earth-light and heaven-light shine.

Now rose-tints bloom from the purple;
  Now the blue climbs over the green;
Now, bright in its bath of sunshine,
  The whole grand Shape is seen.

Is it one, or unnumbered summits, —
The Vision so high, so fair,
Hanging over the singing River
In the magical depths of air?

Ask not the name of my mountain!
Let it rise in its grandeur lone;
Be it one of a mighty thousand,
Or a thousand blent in one.

Would a name evoke new splendor
From its wrapping and folds of light,
Or a line of the weird rock-writing
Make plainer to mortal sight?

You have lived and learnt this marvel; —
That the holiest joy that came
From its beautiful heaven to bless you,
Nor needed nor found a name.

Enough, on the brink of the river
Looking up and away, to know
That the Hill loves the Pemigewasset,
And is glad for its murmurous flow.

Perhaps, if the Campton meadows
Should attract your pilgrim feet
Up the summer road to the mountains,
You may chance my dream to meet:

Either mine, or one more wondrous:
Or perhaps you will look, and say
You behold only rocks and sunshine,
Be it dying or birth of day.

Though you find but the stones that build it,
I shall see through the snow-fall still,
Hanging over the Pemigewasset,
My glorified, dream-crowned Hill.

CHOCORUA.

The pioneer of a great company
That wait behind him, gazing toward the east, —
Mighty ones all, down to the nameless least, —
Though after him none dares to press, where he
With bent head listens to the minstrelsy
Of far waves chanting to the moon, their priest.
What phantom rises up from winds deceased?
What whiteness of the unapproachable sea?
Hoary Chocorua guards his mystery well:

He pushes back his fellows, lest they hear
The haunting secret he apart must tell
To his lone self, in the sky-silence clear:
A shadowy, cloud-cloaked wraith, with shoulders bowed,
He steals, conspicuous, from the mountain-crowd.

CLOUDS ON WHITEFACE.

So lovingly the clouds caress his head —
The mountain-monarch; he, severe and hard,
With white face set like flint horizon-ward;
They weaving softest fleece of gold and red,
And gossamer of airiest silver thread,
To wrap his form, wind-beaten, thunder-scarred.
They linger tenderly, and fain would stay,
Since he, earth-rooted, may not float away.
He upward looks, but moves not; wears their hues;
Draws them unto himself; their beauty shares;
And sometimes his own semblance seems to lose,
His grandeur and their grace so interfuse;
And when his angels leave him unawares,
A sullen rock, his brow to heaven he bares.

North Sandwich, N. H.

A MOUNTAIN-RESURRECTION.

He stood there, a shape Titanic
In the midst of the shining range;
Moment by moment, his features
Beamed with some wonderful change:

For the clouds came down out of heaven;
With light he was robed and crowned,
Till glory exceeded glory
On the gathering storm around.

They melted to mists of silver,
That slid like a winding-sheet,
In swathings of shroud-like whiteness,
From his forehead to his feet.

And then he was seen no longer;
With the sound of a sobbing rain,
The hills withdrew under blackness, —
A mourning funeral-train.

And amid the vanished mountains
We sat, through an autumn day,
Remembering the trusted spirits
Who had passed from our sight away;

And knew that their resurrection
Would be but a veil let down
To show them still in their places,
Unchangeable, and our own;

And knew that the living who love us,
Love on, though the mists of doubt
May level our grand horizon,
And beauty and joy shut out.

And knew — O comforting wonder! —
That the mightiest Love of all,
Perceived not, is round about us
Like an everlasting wall.

So, amid invisible summits,
We wrapped us in calms of thought.
Faith lulled us to slumber; and morning
To life the dead mountains brought.

THREE SONNETS.

THE DISTANT RANGE.

They beckon from their sunset domes afar,
Light's royal priesthood, the eternal hills:
Though born of earth, robed of the sky they are;
And the anointing radiance heaven distils
On their high brows, the air with glory fills.
The portals of the west are opened wide;
And lifted up, absolved from earthly ills,
All thoughts, a reverent throng, to worship glide.
The hills interpret heavenly mysteries,
The mysteries of Light — an open book
Of Revelation: see, its leaves unfold
With crimson borderings, and lines of gold,
Where the rapt reader, though soul-deep his look,
Dreams of a glory deeper than he sees!

THE PRESENCE.

The mountain statelier lifts his blue-veiled head,
While, drawing near, we meet him face to face.
Here, as on holy ground, we softly tread;
Yet, with a tender and paternal grace,
He gives the wild flowers in his lap a place:
They climb his sides, as fondled infants might,
And wind around him, in a light embrace,
Their summer drapery, pink and clinging white.
Great hearts have largest room to bless the small;

Strong natures give the weaker home and rest:
So Christ took little children to his breast,
And, with a reverence more profound, we fall
In the majestic presence that can give
Truth's simplest message: "'T is by love ye live."

THE FAREWELL.

Now ends the hour's communion, near and high:
We have heard whispers from the mountain's heart,
And life henceforth is nobler. With a sigh
Of grateful sadness, let us now depart,
And seek our lower levels. Rills that start
From this Hill's bosom, there reflect the sky,
And his deep shadows greener grace impart
To the sweet fields which low beneath him lie.
One farewell glance from far. The hills are fled!
Hid in the folds of yon funereal cloud!
A moment leans the Loftiest from his shroud:—
"Our thunders purify the vales," he saith:
"'T is not alone by smiles that life is fed:
Awe fills the sanctuary of deep faith."

Near BLUE MOUNTAINS, ME.

AT WINNIPESAUKEE.

O SILENT hills across the lake,
Asleep in moonlight, or awake
To catch the color of the sky,
That sifts through every cloud swept by,—
How beautiful ye are, in change
Of sultry haze and storm-light strange;
How dream-like rest ye on the bar
That parts the billow from the star;
How blend your mists with waters clear,
Till earth floats off, and heaven seems near!

Ye faint and fade, a pearly zone,
The coast-line of a land unknown.
Yet that is sunburnt Ossipee,
Plunged knee-deep in yon glistening sea:
Somewhere among these grouping isles,
Old Whiteface from his cloud-cap smiles,
And gray Chocorua bends his crown,
To look on happy hamlets down;
And every pass and mountain-slope
Leads out and on some human hope.

Here, the great hollows of the hills,
The glamour of the June day fills.

Along the climbing path, the brier,
In rose-bloom beauty beckoning higher,
Breathes sweetly the warm uplands over;
And, gay with buttercups and clover,
Smooth slopes of meadowy freshness make
A green foil to the sparkling lake.

So is it with yon hills that swim
Upon the horizon, blue and dim:
For all the summer is not ours;
On other shores familiar flowers
Find blossoming as fresh as these,
In shade and shine and eddying breeze;
And scented slopes as cool and green,
To kiss of lisping ripples lean.

So is it with the land beyond
This earth we press with step so fond.
Upon those faintly-outlined hills
God's sunshine sleeps, his dew distils:
The dear beatitudes of home
Within the heavenly boundaries come:
The hearts that made life's fragrance here,
To Eden-haunts bring added cheer;
And all the beauty, all the good,
Lost to our lower altitude,
Transfigured, yet the same, are given,
Upon the mountain-heights of heaven.

O cloud-swathed hills the flood across,
Ye hide the mystery of our loss,
Yet hide it but a little while:
Past sunlit shore and shadowy isle,
Out to the still Lake's farther brim,
Erelong our bark the wave shall skim:
And what the vigor and the glow
Our earthly-torpid souls shall know,
When, grounding on the silver sands,
We feel the clasp of loving hands,
And see the walls of sapphire gleam,
Nor tongue can tell, nor heart can dream.

But in your rifts of wondrous light
Wherewith these lower fields are bright,
In every strengthening breeze that brings
The mountain-health upon its wings,
We own the gift of Pentecost,
And not one hint of heaven is lost.

ROCK AND RILL.

"INTO the sunshine out of shade!"
The rill has heard the call,
And, babbling low, her answer made, —
A laugh, 'twixt slip and fall.

Out from her cradle-roof of trees,
Over the free, rough ground!
The peaceful blue above she sees;
The cheerful green around.

A pleasant world for running streams
To steal unnoticed through,
At play with all the sweet sky-gleams,
And nothing else to do!

A rock has stopped the silent rill,
And taught her how to speak:
He hinders her; she chides him still;
He loves her lispings weak.

And still he will not let her go:
But she may chide and sing,
And over him her freshness throw,
Amid her murmuring.

The harebell sees herself no more
In waters clear at play;
Yet never she such azure wore,
Till wept on by the spray.

And many a woodland violet
Stays charmed upon the bank;
Her thoughtful blue eye brimming wet,
The rock and rill to thank.

The rill is blessing in her talk
What half she held a wrong, —
The happy trouble of the rock
That makes her life a song.

THE SCHOOL-MISTRESS.

"How are you so cheerful,
Gentle Edith Lane!
Be it bright or cloudy,
Fall of dew or rain,

In that lonely school-house,
Patiently you stay,
Teaching simple children,
All the livelong day."

"Teaching simple children?
I am simple, too:
So we learn together
Lessons plain as true,
From this thumb-worn Bible,
Full of love's best lore;
Or, to read another,
Just unlatch the door.

"Can I but be cheerful
While I bid them look,
Through the sunny pages
Of each opening book? —
Showing tracks of angels,
On the footworn sod;
Listening to the music
Nature makes to God."

"Have you then no sorrow,
Smiling Edith Lane?
Where the barberry's coral
Rattles on the pane,
Where, in endless yellow,
Autumn flowers I see,
Working for a living
Were a woe to me."

"Sorrow! I — a woman,
And in years not young?
Of the common chalice,
Drops are on my tongue.
What of that? No whisper
To my heart is lost,
From the barberry-clusters,
Sweetened by the frost;

"From the rooted sunshine —
Golden-rod in bloom,
Lighting up the hillsides,
For November's gloom.
Shall I blot with weeping
Nature's joy and grace?
Rather be her gladness
Mirrored in my face.

"'Working for a living'?
May no worse befall!

Love is always busy;
God works, over all.
Life is worth the earning,
For its daily cheer,
Shared with those who love me,
In yon cottage dear.

"If you can, fair lady,
Go and be a drone!
Leave me with the children,
Dear as if my own.
Leave me to the humming
Of my little hive,
Glad to earn a living,
Glad to be alive!"

GETTING ALONG.

We trudge on together, my good man and I,
Our steps growing slow as the years hasten by;
Our children are healthy, our neighbors are kind,
And with the world round us we 've no fault to find.

'T is true that he sometimes will choose the worst way
For sore feet to walk in, a weary hot day;
But then my wise husband can scarcely go wrong,
And, somehow or other, we 're getting along.

There are soft summer shadows beneath our home trees:
How handsome he looks, sitting there at his ease!
We watch the flocks coming while sunset grows dim,
His thoughts on the cattle, and mine upon him.

The blackbirds and thrushes come chattering near;
I love the thieves' music, but listen with fear:
He shoots the gay rogues I would pay for their song; —
We 're different, sure; still, we 're getting along.

He seems not to know what I eat, drink, or wear;
He 's trim and he 's hearty, so why should I care?
No harsh word from him my poor heart ever shocks:
I would n't mind scolding, — so seldom he talks.

Ah, well! 't is too much that we women expect:
He only has promised to love and protect.
See, I lean on my husband, so silent and strong;
I 'm sure there 's no trouble; — we 're getting along.

Life is n't so bright as it was long ago,
When he visited me amid tempest and snow,
And would bring me a ribbon or jewel to wear,
And sometimes a rosebud to twist in my hair:

But when we are girls, we can all laugh and sing;
Of course, growing old, life 's a different thing!
My good man and I have forgot our May song,
But still we are quietly getting along.

It is true I was rich; I had treasures and land;
But all that he asked was my heart and my hand:
Though people do say it, 't is what they can't prove, —
"He married for money; she, — poor thing! for love."

My fortune is his, and he saves me its care;
To make his home cheerful 's enough for my share.
He seems always happy our broad fields among;
And so I 'm contented: — we 're getting along.

With stocks to look after, investments to find,
It 's not very strange that I 'm seldom in mind:
He can't stop to see how my time 's dragging on, —
And oh! *would* he miss me, if I should be gone?

Should he be called first, I must follow him fast,
For all that 's worth living for then will be past.
But I 'll not think of losing him; fretting is wrong,
While we are so pleasantly getting along.

UNWEDDED.

Behold her there in the evening sun,
That kindles the Indian Summer trees
To a separate burning bush, one by one,
Wherein the Glory Divine she sees!

Mate and nestlings she never had:
Kith and kindred have passed away;
Yet the sunset is not more gently glad,
That follows her shadow, and fain would stay.

For out of her life goes a breath of bliss,
And a sunlike charm from her cheerful eye,
That the cloud and the loitering breeze would miss;
A balm that refreshes the passer-by.

"Did she choose it, this single life?" —
Gossip, she saith not, and who can tell?
But many a mother, and many a wife,
Draws a lot more lonely, we all know well.

Doubtless she had her romantic dream,
Like other maidens, in May-time sweet,
That flushes the air with a lingering gleam,
And goldens the grass beneath her feet: —

A dream unmoulded to visible form,
That keeps the world rosy with mists of youth,
And holds her in loyalty close and warm,
To her grand ideal of manly truth.

"But is she happy, a woman, alone?"—
Gossip, alone in this crowded earth,
With a voice to quiet its hourly moan,
And a smile to heighten its rarer mirth?

There are ends more worthy than happiness:
Who seeks it, is digging joy's grave, we know.
The blessed are they who but live to bless;
She found out that mystery, long ago.

To her motherly, sheltering atmosphere,
The children hasten from icy homes:
The outcast is welcome to share her cheer;
And the saint with a fervent benison comes.

For the heart of woman is large as man's;
God gave her His orphaned world to hold,
And whispered through her His deeper plans
To save it alive from the outer cold.

And here is a woman who understood
Herself, her work, and God's will with her,
To gather and scatter His sheaves of good,
And was meekly thankful, though men demur.

Would she have walked more nobly, think,
With a man beside her, to point the way,
Hand joining hand in the marriage-link?
Possibly, Yes: it is likelier, Nay.

For all men have not wisdom and might:
Love's eyes are tender, and blur the map;
And a wife will follow by faith, not sight,
In the chosen footprint, at any hap.

Having the whole, she covets no part:
Hers is the bliss of all blessed things.
The tears that unto her eyelids start,
Are those which a generous pity brings;

Or the sympathy of heroic faith
With a holy purpose, achieved or lost.
To stifle the truth is to stop her breath,
For she rates a lie at its deadly cost.

Her friends are good women and faithful men,
Who seek for the True, and uphold the Right;

And who shall proclaim her the weaker, when
Her very presence puts sin to flight?

"And dreads she never the coming years?" —
Gossip, what are the years to her?
All winds are fair, and the harbor nears,
And every breeze a delight will stir.

Transfigured under the sunset trees,
That wreathe her with shadowy gold and red,
She looks away to the purple seas,
Whereon her shallop will soon be sped.

She reads the hereafter by the here:
A beautiful Now, and a better To Be:
In life is all sweetness, in death no fear: —
You waste your pity on such as she.

HER CHOICE.

STRANGE, strange to herself it seemed, for a moment's time, — no more, —
As he turned to smile from his plough in sight of the cottage door,
And she smiled back, and went in under the woodbine leaves,
And sang at her work with the bird that wove a nest in the eaves.

It was not the man of her dreams, out there in his coarse farm-frock,
Sturdy and firm on the earth as an oak or a lichened rock,
With an eye sun-clear in its health, and a cheek red-bronzed with tan! —
No; that shadow shrank into mist, and fled from this living man.

She had shaped a pretty ideal, as a child might fashion a doll;
She had clothed it with such perfection as never Heaven let fall
On the shoulders of mortal wight; but slowly, one after one,
From her idol fluttered away the shreds by fantasy spun.

And what of him then was left? There seemed to scatter in air
An eyebrow's curve, a weak lip with a delicate fringe of hair,
And a town-bred curl of contempt for the boors who till the land. —
She shuddered, to think how empty sometimes is a wedded hand!

Yet once she had pictured herself that pitiful stripling's bride;
Would have laid her heart on the shrine of a puppet deified!
For the first commands of the ten all maidens are prone to break,
In bowing down to such gods as their own crude fancies make.

And this had been her first love! To her forehead rushed a flame.
As memory taunted and laughed, — the blush of a matron's shame
At her girlhood's shallowness. Ah! the poets falsely sing
That the loveliest blossoms of all are gathered in early spring.

Many a May-day past she had found under leafless trees
A crowfoot, perhaps, or a tuft of pallid anemones;
Could these compare with the rose, grown shapely in summer's heat,
Or the lily's late-brimmed cup, or the spice of the meadow-sweet?

The high sun deepens the scent and color of slow-blown flowers;
Intense with the white warmth of heaven, glows earth, in her mid-noon hours:
The more life, richer the love, else life itself is a lie,
And aspiration and faith on the gusts of April die.

And — there the furrow he turned, — her husband, whose cheerful years
Looked out of his eyes with a light that conquered her foolish fears
Of the coming loneliness, when the world would be chill with rime;
Stanch friends and honest were he and his elder field-mate, Time.

And Time, laying by his scythe at their hearth, in the evenings long,
Would read from his ancient scroll, would charm them with noble song:
And life would mellow with love, and the future would open fair
And grand, as the silver of age fell softly upon their hair.

For she had not wedded a clod, whose heart was earthy, of earth,
Whose cattle and acres and crops were the measure of his worth:
He knew the ring of a truth, and the shape of a royal thought,
And how at integrity's mint the wealth of a land is wrought.

He labored with mind and strength, and yet he could wisely rest;
He toiled for his daily bread, and ate it with wholesome zest
At the world-wide human board, the brother and friend of all
With whom he could share a hope, on whom let a blessing fall.

She had chosen a working-man; never idler at heart was she;
And her possible fate had been the fate of a homesick bee
In a butterfly's leash, driven on amid scentless and useless bloom, —
What drudgery were not bliss to inanities of that doom?

Woman's lot at the best is hard; but hardest of all to share
No growth into larger thought, no struggle, burden, or prayer.
And again she caught his smile, and silently, proudly said,
"This man, with the love of my heart and the life of my soul, I wed."

BY AND BY.

We built a bridge across the gulf
  That held us separate here;
Our perfect faith was more than sight;
  The far was as the near.
We said, "Though glad things out of reach
  Above us float and fly,
More gladness and more beauty still
  Await us, by and by."

Thy heart to mine, and mine to thine,
Said, "Only true be thou,
Nor lull thyself with alien dreams,
Nor break the unspoken vow;
And we, the storm-cloud overpast,
The thunder-crash rolled by,
Shall meet, and cross the rainbow-bridge
In sunshine, by and by."

Who saw that beauteous rainbow-bridge
Break into shreds of air,
Till yawning, gray, and measureless,
The sullen gulfs lay bare?
Alas! it is not as it was!
Where are we, thou and I,
Left with the faint, receding breath
Of echo, "By and by?"

And fainter, farther yet, the sound
Dies out in blankness blue:
Do all abysses gape, unbridged,
All seas lie shoreless, too?
Is Heaven itself a mist, a cheat?
Nay! the heart's lonely cry,
Through hollow depths of utter loss,
Rings loyal, — "By and by!"

CHRIEMHILD.[1]

You know the strange old Nibelungen story,
The fitful, billowy song of love and hate,
Of rare Chriemhild, and her rose-garden's glory
By wrath laid desolate?

Glad shines that garden, with its leagues of roses,
Midway the old time and the new between;
Yet not a flower its silken bar encloses,
So sweet as the Rose-Queen.

She walks there in the young world's radiant morning,
Intwining hero-garlands, redly gay,
For twelve strong knights, who, armed, for battle-warning,
To watch the garden stay.

She seeks, undaunted, its remotest edges,
Cut from the forest's still and murky gloom,

[1] "Below, on each side of the door, are two beautiful groups. That to the right of the spectator represents Siegfried and Chriemhild. She is leaning on the shoulder of her warlike husband, with an air of the most inimitable and graceful abandonment in her whole figure: a falcon sits upon her hand, on which her eyes are turned with the most profound expression of tenderness and melancholy; she is thinking upon her dream, in which was foreshadowed the early and terrible doom of her husband." — Mrs. Jameson. — *Description of the New Palace at Munich.*

Where, close to haunted glens and caverned ledges,
The freshest roses bloom.

Black shadows, in behind the beech-leaves hidden,
That lean to clutch the sunshine's falling gold,
And dim, deep thickets, by white glimmerings thridden,
Send her no thrill of cold.

And she can hear, by woman's fears unshaken,
The warrior pine's long requiem on the air,
And winds astray, that from lone hollows waken
A wail, as of despair.

She can pluck roses, unaware of danger,
Since innocence keeps watch and ward within:
To evil dreads a careless, happy stranger,
Unvisited of sin.

One night a dream alighted in her bower:
A mystic falcon perched upon her hand;
Daring and beautiful, he curbed his power,
As waiting her command.

Then two fierce eagles through the azure swooping,
Plunged into that brave bird their cruel claws,
And snatched him from her sight, with sorrow drooping;
Ah! bitter was the cause!

For Siegfried was that falcon, her heart's chosen,
Though yet in maiden thought forsworn, unseen;
An honored wife — a widow horror-frozen —
So reads thy fate, sweet queen.

Sweet queen! alas, alas! sweet queen no longer:
In fury and in anguish ends the dream;
The lurid lines of destiny burn stronger,
And hide her beauty's beam.

Gaze long upon the dear, sad face before you,
For never lovelier lady will you see
In dew, and balm, and freshness bending o'er you, —
The Rose of Burgundy.

'T is on the wall of a Bavarian palace;
A fresco by a master-limner wrought;
You see Chriemhild herself, ere wasting malice
Had all to ruin brought.

She clings to Siegfried, holding on her finger,
The falcon of her vision, — ominous bird!
While far off, where her chieftain's glances linger,
The rush of doom is heard.

Behold the nucleus of the old song's glory.
This is the picture of Chriemhild to keep;
For you can only finish the wild story,
To shudder and to weep.

Link not her name with Etzel's barbarous splendor,
Nor the bold Nibelung race she snared to death:
Embalm her memory, womanly and tender,
In love's most sacred breath!

You happier women of these later ages,
With white hands by her hideous guilt unsoiled, —
Had she read forward her own history's pages,
Like you she had recoiled.

Who hears, in that young, rapturous inspiration,
When every thought takes up its harp and sings,
The undertone of demon-visitation
Muttering beneath Love's wings?

Mean jealousies her queenly bosom fluttered,
Wakening to war the monstrous brood of crime,
Dragon with fiend, until her tale is uttered,
A fear unto all time.

Nay; end it with this portrait of a woman,
To whom is possible yet a perfect lot.
When beauty once has blossomed in the human,
Its blight remember not!

Even blotted so, her story is immortal.
Transfigured by her love, Chriemhild shall stand,
Alway with Siegfried at the palace-portal,
The dream-bird on her hand.

LEGEND OF A VEIL.[1]

Seven hundred years ago, a pair on whom
The accidental honor of a crown
Had worthily fallen, in their morning hour
Of bridal bliss, stood hand in hand, and gazed
Into a world which love makes Eden still;
Leopold of Austria and his Swabian bride.
The old baronial rampart where they stood
Frowned down upon Vienna, that smiled back.
They, in their open balcony of oak,
Sunlit and airy, saw the wide earth bloom
Around them like one flower, as lovers will:
And, for a while, they silently were glad.
Then, out of his full joy, young Leopold spoke: —

[1] From Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders.*

"Beloved, see this beauteous realm of mine,
Whereof thou reignest queen. How all things smile
To welcome thy sweet looks! How every herb
And bough and thicket upward sends to thee
A pleasant smell! And He is surely pleased,
Who sits above the sun, and makes the world
Blossom with gladness, — He is surely pleased
To see us stand here happy in his sight.
Yet not even love brings satisfying bliss:
No joy that overflows must run to waste:
And work awaits us in this Paradise,
Where thou shalt be my helpmeet; thou, mine Eve!
Rulers are gardeners only. Thou and I
Will toil among the earth-bedraggled vines
And frost-nipped blossoms of humanity,
Till life around looks fresh as Nature does,
Sunned in our love, and in the smile of God.

"Before I saw thy face, the mother of Christ
Was ever as a light amid my thoughts,
Charming me forth unto heroic deeds;
Showing the way of lowly sacrifice
Where kingly souls with her dear Son must walk.
My Agnes, from thy gentle eye distils
A ray more luminous in its tenderness
Through every inmost channel of resolve.
Thy woman's soul with my man's mind shall blend,
One work, one inspiration: I shall rule
Nobly through thee, my bride, my beautiful!"

As one who tunes a flute among the hills,
And hears, entranced, the music eddying back
In palpitating echoes through the air,
All unaware that he awoke that joy,
Agnes took softly up her husband's word
In charmed unconsciousness: —
"O beautiful life,
O beautiful world, wherein I live with thee!
Thanks unto God, who made thee first my friend,
Then lover and husband. Little would it be
To stand beside thee here, thy wife and queen,
Were I not raised to nobler eminence,
Lifted to share with thee both work and thought,
Mate of thine aspirations. Friend, best friend,
And dearest always by that name to me,
Because the name is an immortal one, —
Might I not look as now in thy soul's eyes,
And feel thy love through larger and through less,
Diffusing calm, opening new wells of joy
That rise beyond expression, making all
I share with thee as sacramental food,
What had been left? The thought is bitter bleak:
Dreary and gray as the Siberian wilds,

Had spread my life. But God would still have been:
I should have met Him in the wilderness,
Thee, afterward, perhaps, in Heaven.
Mine own!
Whene'er I hear the convent vesper-bell,
Or echo of a midnight cloister-chant,
The manly chorals in sonorous praise
Responding to the unseen sisters' hymn,
I think there may be hearts like thine and mine,
Hidden behind the nun's veil and the cowl,
Forever separated, yet so near!
God listens through the screens they cannot lift;
The chords lost here ring full in heaven. And yet
'T is surely better to strike all the keys
Of this our manifold being to His praise,
Sending through low and high, through discords even,
One thrill of unison. All we have is His,
And we ourselves: and we will live so here,
That in that land where are no marriages,
We shall forever in one mansion dwell,
Still finding heaven in some joint work for Him.
Ah, what can heaven be, and this earth so fair?
River that waterest Eden, art thou then
More glorious than our Danube, when the doors
Of the East are open, and the sunshine pours
Upon his path between the solemn hills,
And over the green, grateful fields? And thou,
City of Light, aglow with jasper walls,
And gates of pearl, art thou more beautiful
Than our Vienna, lifting up her hands
To us from cottage-lattice, tower, and spire,
Beckoning from her innumerable lives
That we can bless, and shall?
O royal life,
Royal to all who carry royal hearts,
Thou shalt be benediction to our realm!
Let us build tabernacles here, beloved,
On durable foundations of deep bliss!
Upon some height let us set up a house,
A home for holy men, to sanctify
The memory of this, our marriage-day."

So spake that happy bride, and upward looked
To meet the answer of her husband's eyes.
Bending, he lifted her white, floating veil,
And touched her forehead with his lips, and said
With reverent earnestness, "We will."
The wind,
The only listener passing, heard their vow,
And suddenly and lightly took the veil,
And bore it far along the orange-boughs,
And over the rose-gardens all in bloom,
And hid it in the green woods out of sight.

Then Leopold sent out squires to bring it back,
For Agnes' sake, who could not bear to lose
One token of their married happiness;
But none could find it. And the cheerful years
Passed over them like days, filled to the brim
With princely undertakings, and perfumed
With gratitude, which every princely heart
Takes as a spur to steadier energy,
And fervor of well-doing: so the vow
Of that fair morning from their memory passed.

Years after, as a summer twilight fell,
Giving his flagging steed a languid rein,
Duke Leopold let his huntsmen homeward ride
Far out of sight before him. Through a glen
He loitered on, where never hoof had trod,
Crushing the juicy bracken and crisp turf,
All spray, and spice, and coolness; under pines
That lifted their green tops like minster-spires
Into blue light above, and hid their ranks
Of spectral stems and dimly-woven boughs
In deeper than cathedral gloom behind.
Out of the wood a silent rivulet stole,
And caught the red of sunset, and then crept
Into the shadow of the beckoning ferns.
A bird trilled from a bush: within the wood
Another answered; then a hundred sang.
The shivering sweetness through the bracken passed,
And Leopold halted. Standing by his steed,
Against the darkened forest, with the glow
Of sunset falling on his upturned brow,
Strange peace enthralled him; and subdued he said,
"This is a holy place, a holy hour:
Here might the angels walk."
Even while he spoke,
He caught a glimpse of wavering whiteness swayed
Within a dingle close at hand. Thereat
Startled one moment, instincts of a knight
In the next spurred him towards the mystery,
And lo, the veil of Agnes! It had hung
Here, in the sanctuary of the wood,
Heaven-kept, while robber-tempests went and came,
With the birds singing round it, and the flowers
Filling it with perfume, from spring to spring,
In token of a promise unfulfilled.
Leopold was touched. Yet, thridding a blind path
Out of the glimmering twilight of the pines,
"Ever," he said, "I doubted if the monks
Praised God so well as many an honest serf,
Who earned his bread and ate it thankfully.
They pitch their notes too high for humble folk,
And call the common singing sacrilege.

If peasants thank our Lord for anything,
It is for wife, and little ones, and home,
As I for my sweet Agnes and her babes.
No saintly joy is this, the brethren say,
And pity us and pray for us, and wrap
Themselves in cloaks of sanctity, and walk
Their shining road to heaven above our heads, —
Pavement of gold that we must keep repaired,
Whate'er befalls us in the thoroughfare,
Or on the broken bridge across the chasm.
Labor, methinks, and prayer are of one piece.
Nay, toil is also praise, the best, from those
Whose fingers are more flexile than their tongues.

"Alack! what do I murmur to myself?
Agnes would grieve to overhear these thoughts.
She likens prayers and hymns unto a stream
Flowing amid the sandy wastes of life,
Watering the roots of action; nerving up
The earnest toiler's strength; the wine of heaven.
Our priests sit at the guarded fountain-head,
To keep the waters pure, and pour the wine
For fainting pilgrims. Niggardly it were,
Saith she, to grudge them shelter, who prepare
A tent for us amid the wilderness.
And Agnes is to me what all these hymns
And chants and mighty chorals are to her, —
A glorious lifting-up; to heart, delight;
To hands, unbounded strength. I would I were
A good King Robert[1] for her sake, to vein
The court and camp with rills of saintly song,
A thrill of *Veni Sancte Spiritus*
To waken underneath the satin scarfs
And ermine mantles of my followers.
I am but Leopold, an ungifted man,
Save for my ducal crown and her dear love.
A vow is still a vow, though tardily kept.
She shall behold a stately cloister built
Within the glen that hid her bridal veil.
And I will toil on, hoping yet to see
Each hut within my realm a home like mine,
And every peasant happy as a duke."

So Kloster-Neuberg rose among the hills;
There Agnes' veil is shrined, and Leopold there
Is worshipped as a saint.
Good man, he sleeps
Too soundly to be vexed by anything

[1] "King Robert the Second of France was author of the touching hymn, in which all his gentle nature seems to speak: 'Veni Sancte Spiritus.' King Robert had certainly more of the monk than the king about him. Necessity drove him to the cares and the state of royalty; but his joys were in church-music, which he composed, in devotion, and in alms-giving." — *Christian Life in Song.*

That may be said or sung above his grave.
Perhaps he would have thought the monks misplaced
The aureole that they set upon his brow,
Not on his bride's. No doubt he would have asked
To be remembered for some other work
Than convent-building: but he could not choose;
He is a saint perforce. The healthier grace
Of honorable manhood counts him naught,
And less than naught his household happiness·
Within the threshold laid by wedded joy,
The very thought of it is sacrilege.
And yet the buried sweetness of true love
That once hung rose-wreaths round the Austrian throne,
The brethren with a deprecating sigh
Will sometimes air, unfolding Agnes' veil.

ENTANGLED.

Birds among the budding trees,
  Blossoms on the ringing ground:
Light from those? or song from these?
  Can the tangle be unwound?

For the bluebird's warbled note,
  Violet-odors hither flung;
And the violet curved her throat,
  Just as if she sat and sung.

Dandelions dressed in gold,
  Give out echoes clear and loud,
To the oriole's story, told
  With gay poise and gesture proud.

And the swaying yellow-bird,
  Trilling, thrills their hollow stems,
Until every root is stirred,
  Under their dropped diadems.

Swallows thicken through the air, —
  Curve and drift of plumy brown, —
Wafting, showering everywhere,
  Melody's light seed-notes down.

Beauty, music on the earth;
  Music, beauty in the sky;
Guess the mystery of their birth!
  All the haunting what and why.

Nature weaves a marvellous braid;
  Tints and tones how deftly blent!

Who unwinds the web she made?
Thou, who wearest her wise content.

Wrapped within her beauty's fold,
Of her song thyself a part,
Plainly are her secrets told
Unto thee, O pure of heart!

THE RIDDLE OF BEAUTY.

Brown bird of spring, on pinion soft
Ascending,
A voice to reddening dawn aloft
Thus lending;
Few heed thy song; why is it sweet?
Why art thou beautiful as fleet,
Light comer,
Bewildered in the stir and heat
Of summer?

White clouds, that over the blue sky
Are pressing,
The pilots of an argosy
Of blessing;
Ye float with all your sails unfurled
Above a dull, unconscious world;
None caring
Whence ye those fleeces, golden-curled,
Are bearing.

Blue autumn flower, thy deep heart stores
Heaven's azure;
And thence from out thy chalice pours
Rare pleasure.
The frost a plague-spot blackening casts;
Thy fringe is torn when sleety blasts
Grow stronger;
Men love thee while thy beauty lasts;
No longer.

Thou maid, around whose lip and eye
Intwining,
The loveliest tints of earth and sky
Are shining, —
Thy sweet song dies; thy freshness must
Fade like a flower's, by blight and dust
O'ertaken;
And all the roots of mortal trust
Are shaken.

Oh, why should thus the beautiful
O'erbrood us,
Yet ever its harmonious rule
Elude us?
The grave its hopeless blot may be;
Largess to eyes that cannot see
'T is giving;
The joy, the pain, the mystery
Of living.

Say whence, O Beauty, floatest thou,
And whither?
But in a shade, an echo now
Swept hither.
Born with the sounds that hurry past?
Dead with the shapes that flee so fast?
Oh, never!
The soul of each fair thing must last
Forever.

The glory of the rose remains
Unfaded,
Though now no wreath from blossoming lanes
Be braided.
A word unknown she drooping said;
A breath was in her, from the dead
To waft her:
And Beauty's riddle shall be read
Hereafter.

HINTS.

Sweet Nature, speak to me!
I have been listening so long, so long!
The goldfinch round the linden winds his song:
A spangled butterfly just flew this way,
And stopped as if he had some word to say;
The water-lily's leaves are half apart,
Pale with some secret hidden in her heart.
I hear, but yet the inner sense is sealed;
For me there is a mystery unrevealed:
Sweet Nature, speak to me!

Dear Book of Mystery,
Whose leaves a breeze of June is turning o'er,
To show me one forgotten word the more,
The living truths upon thy page are dry
As last year's violets that beside them lie:
The pastures green, the waters flowing still,
The shepherds' watch on Bethlehem's moonlit hill,

Are but as tales of any common book:
Where is the light by which my soul should look,
Dear Book of Mystery?

Love is both eye and ear.
When like the west wind breathes my longing prayer,
Pausing the need of humblest hearts to share,
Then will sweet parables unfold their sense,
And Nature speak with all her eloquence.
Let the heart stagnate o'er its selfish dreams,
And life a veiled and silent statue seems:
Leaning upon the bosom of the Lord,
Love hears the lightest whisper of His word:
Love is both eye and ear.

THE grace of the bending grasses,
The flush of the dawn-lit sky,
The scent that lingers and passes
When the loitering wind goes by,
Are gushes and hints of sweetness,
From the unseen deeps afar, —
The foam-edge of heaven's completeness
Swept outward through flower and star.

For the cloud, and the leaf, and the blossom,
The shadow, the flickering beam,
Are waifs on the sea-like bosom
Of beauty beyond our dream:
Its glow to our earth is given;
It freshens this lower air:
Oh, the fathomless wells of heaven, —
The springs of the earth rise there!

THEY whose hearts are whole and strong,
Loving holiness,
Living clean from soil of wrong,
Wearing truth's white dress, —
They unto no far-off height
Wearily need climb;
Heaven to them is close in sight
From these shores of time.

Only the anointed eye
Sees in common things, —
Gleam of wave, and tint of sky, —
Heavenly blossomings.
To the hearts where light has birth
Nothing can be drear;
Budding through the bloom of earth,
Heaven is always near.

"TAKE the fruit I give you," says the bending tree;
"Nothing but a burden is it all to me.
Lighten ye my branches; let them toss in air!
Only leave me freedom next year's load to bear."

"Do my waters cheer thee," says the gurgling spring,
"With the crystal coolness 't is their life to bring?
Leave me not to stagnate, creeping o'er the plain;
Drink for thy refreshment; drink, and come again!"

"Can I yield you blessings?" says the friendly heart.
"Fear not I am poorer, though I much impart.
Wherefore should you thank me? giving is my need:
Love that wrought none comfort sorrow were indeed."

THE curtain of the dark
Is pierced by many a rent:
Out of the star-wells, spark on spark
Trickles through night's torn tent.

Grief is a tattered tent
Wherethrough God's light doth shine:
Who glances up, at every rent
Shall catch a ray divine.

THOU mayst not rest in any lovely thing,
Thou, who wert formed to seek and to aspire;
For no fulfillment of thy dreams can bring
The answer to thy measureless desire.

The beauty of the round, green world is not
Of the world's essence; far within the sky
The tints which make this bubble bright are wrought:
The bubble bursts; the light can never die.

Thou canst not make a pillow for thy head
Of anything so brittle and so frail;
Yet mayst thou by its transient glow be led
Into the heaven where sun and star grow pale;

Where, out of burning whiteness, flows the light;
Light, which is but the visible stream of love;
Hope's ladder, brightening upward through the night,
Whereon our feet grow wingèd as they move.

Let beauty sink in light; in central deeps
Of love unseen let dearest eyes grow dim:
They draw us after, up the infinite steeps
Where souls familiar track the seraphim.

VIOLETS.

THEY neither toil nor spin;
And yet their robes have won
A splendor never seen within
The courts of Solomon.

Tints that the cloud-rifts hold,
And rainbow-gossamer,
The violet's tender form enfold;
No queen is draped like her.

All heaven and earth and sea
Have wrought with subtlest power
That clothed in purple she might be,—
This little fading flower.

We, who must toil and spin,
What clothing shall we wear?
The glorious raiment we shall win,
Life shapes us, everywhere.

God's inner heaven hath sun,
And rain, and space of sky,
Wherethrough for us his spindles run,
His mighty shuttles fly.

His seamless vesture white
He wraps our spirits in;
He weaves his finest webs of light
For us, who toil and spin.

APPLE-BLOSSOMS.

APPLE-BLOSSOMS, budding, blowing,
In the soft May air:
Cups with sunshine overflowing,—
Flakes of fragrance, drifting, snowing,
Showering everywhere!

Fairy promises, outgushing
From the happy trees!
White souls into love-light blushing,—
Heavenly thoughts to utterance rushing,—
Are ye not like these?

Such an overflow of sweetness
Needs the heart of spring;

"Apple blossoms, budding, blowing." Page 42.

In her wealth of bloom is meetness,
Though to the ripe fruit's completeness
All she may not bring.

Words are more than idle seeming;
Blossoms of good-will.
What she would do, Love is dreaming;
What she can, ashamed of scheming,
Cramped and stinted still.

Apple-blossoms, billowy brightness
On the tide of May,
Oh, to wear your rose-touched whiteness!
Flushing into bloom, with lightness
To give life away!

THE DEATH OF JUNE.

JUNE falls asleep upon her bier of flowers:
In vain are dewdrops sprinkled over her;
In vain would fond winds fan her back to life.
Her hours are numbered on the floral dial;
Astræa's scales have weighed her minutes out,
Poised on the Zodiac; and the Northern Crown
Hangs sparkling in the zenith just at eve,
To show a queen is passing. See where stands,
Pausing on tiptoe, with full, flushing lips,
And outstretched arms, her sister, bright July,
Eager to kiss the blossoms, that will fade
If her hot breath but touch them.
June is dead.
Dead, without dread or pain, her gayest wreaths
Twined with her own hands for her funeral.
At first she smiled upon us, garlanded
With columbines and azure lupine-buds;
But now we find a few pale roses, dropped
In her last dreamy loitering through the fields,
Or see her wild geraniums by the brook,
Her laurels and azaleas in the woods.
These gather we as keepsakes of dear June,
Though not unmindful of the humbler flowers
That thought it joy to bloom around her feet;
The buttercups and blue-eyed-grass that peeped
Under the wayside bars at travelers;
Prunella lingering in the wagon's track;
The evening primrose, glimmering like a star
When the sun set; and the prim mullein too,
Folded in flannels from the eastern winds,
Damp dews, and reckless songs of bob-o'-links.

A warmer reign begins, and they must fade
Beneath its splendor; even these richer blooms, —
Orchis and Arethusa quaintly robed,
And harebells nodding to blue skies and streams,
And white pond-lilies, scarcely opening
In time to catch the farewell look of June:
But the midsummer air is balmy yet,
With the sweet, lingering breath of flowers that died,
And left their fragrance for a legacy
To weary, dusty days they never saw.

Nature has meanings for the wise to guess.
The grass springs up like good thoughts in a soul
That loves and blesses all things, high and low.
The rose breathes out a passion and a beauty
Far sweeter than her bloom. And God sends man,
When he approaches heaven with lofty words,
To the green cloisters, where, from whitest calm,
The lily of the valley's incense-cloud
Ascends to Him like an unspoken prayer.

The universe is one great, loving thought,
Written in hieroglyphs of bud and bloom;
And we in human faces, human forms,
Not overgrown or ruinous with sin,
The same inspiring characters may read;
May feel sweet emanations from the life
Of one whose soul is closely knit with God's,
As if the gates of blessed Paradise
Again swung open to this outcast world.

Creator, Father! Thou art nature's wealth.
Suns, blossoms, insects, worlds, and souls of men,
Draw life's deep joy from Thee, their treasury.
Oft, like a beggar suddenly made rich,
I sink beneath the overpowering sense
Of Thee in all things. Sometimes 't is the moon,
Orbed like an Eye dilating with calm love,
That drowns me in pale, silent waves of light;
Sometimes it is the mighty, shadowing hills,
That crush me with a greatness not their own:
Or stars burn glory through me, living coals
On the heaped altar of the universe.

But whispers oftener, borne from common things,
Waken a subtle faculty within,
A sense of deeper beauty yet unbreathed:
As at the rainbow-bridge sat Asgard's ward
Listening through every season, and could hear
The grass grow leagues away, — so comes to me
A golden gladness, with keen, delicate edge
Piercing the films that wrap the inner sense,

Making it joy to think of swelling buds,
And fruit slow-ripening on the apple-trees,
And young birds fledging in the robin's nest:
By every outward sluice runs through my soul,
And overflows its brim, the thought of Thee!

But the swift memory of man and sin
Returns, and drains away my happiness.
O God! that man were good! That he would not
Make himself pestilent by brooding long
Over low thoughts and deeds, — a wind that lurks
For poisons in the marsh: — that he were true
And loving, like all natural things, that grow
Best in the sunshine, drawing from Thy light
Their joy, their strength from working Thy firm will!
Then were this human life a summer breeze
Freshing the earth with balmy draughts of bloom;
And death were but subsiding into heaven,
As June flowers softly fade upon the light
Of brighter noons, yet leave their breath behind.

THE INDIAN SUMMER.

'T is the time
When the chime
Of the seasons' choral band is ringing out.
Smoky brightness fills the air,
For the light winds everywhere
Censers full of flowery embers swing about.
There is sweetness that oppresses,
As a tender parting blesses;
There 's a softened glow of beauty,
As when Love is wreathing Duty;
There are melodies that seem
Weaving past and future into one fair dream.

To her bier
Comes the year —
Not with weeping and distress, as mortals do;
But, to guide her way to it,
All the trees have torches lit;
Crimson maples are ablaze, the woodlands through;
Gay witch-hazels in the river
Watch their own bright tapers quiver;
Flickering burn the birches yellow;
Walnuts glimmer, brown and mellow;
Dark, sad pines stand breathless by,
Mourners sole, and mourning that they cannot die.

Through the trees
Tolls the breeze;
Tolls, then rings a merry peal, and tolls again.
Dead leaves, shaken by the sound,
Slowly float and drop around:
So does memory lull or echo thoughts of pain.
Dead leaves lie upon earth's bosom,
Side by side with many a blossom;
Gentians, fringed with azure glory, —
Sky-flakes, dropped on meadows hoary;
Asters, thick and bright as sparks
Struck by seraph oarsmen from their starry barks.

Oh, to die
When the sky
Smiles behind the Indian Summer's hazy veil!
Thus to glorify decay,
Going in life's best array,
Unto groves where death is a forgotten tale!
Falls a sorrow on the spirit?
Heavenly hopes are springing near it.
Earth, a happy child, rejoices,
Keeping time with angel voices:
When such autumn days are done,
There 's a crown behind thy rays, thou setting sun!

WOULD YOU?

Could you keep the tints of spring
On the woods in misty brightness, —
Keep the half-veiled boughs a-swing
To the linnet's flitting lightness, —
Through the birch leaves' rippling green
Hold the maple-keys from dropping, —
On the sward with May-showers clean,
Cheat the violets into stopping;

Could you make the rosebud's lips
Vow to be a bud forever, —
From the sedges' wavering tips
Bid the dewy pearl drop never;
Could you make the sunrise hour
For a lifetime overbrood you;
Could you change the year's full dower
For its first faint promise — would you?

Though a bubbling cup we quaff,
Fresh from sunny founts of morning,
When the world is all a laugh,
And a welcome without warning; —

At life's Cana-feast, the guest,
  Lingering on, with thirst unsated,
Finds a later draught the best:
  Miracles, — when thou hast waited!

Thought must shade and sun the soul
  With its glorious mutations;
Every life-song is a whole
  Sweeter for its variations.
Wherefore with your bliss at strife?
  'T was an angel that withstood you!
Could you change your perfect life
  For a dream of living — would you?

BETTER.

THAT haunting dream of Better,
  Forever at our side!
It tints the far horizon,
  It sparkles on the tide.
The cradle of the Present
  Too narrow is for rest:
The feet of the Immortal
  Leap forth to seek the Best.

O beauty, trailing sadness!
  Despair, hope's loftiest birth!
With tears and aspirations
  Have ye bedewed the earth.
The opening buds of April
  Untimely frost may chill;
The soul of sweet October
  Faints out in mystery still.

What buriest thou, gay childhood?
  Swift youth, what fled with thee?
Laugh'st at our losses, Sorrow,
  As in some godlike glee?
Away, away forever
  Our vessels seem to sail:
The Eternal Breath o'ertakes them;
  Home speeds them every gale.

The filmy gold and purple
  Swathed not the hills we trod:
'T was hard and common climbing,
  The bramble and the clod.
The bitterness we tasted
  Was Truth's most wholesome leaven:
The friends who left us lonely
  Are opening doors in heaven.

And now the deeper midnight
Uncovers larger stars;
And grafts of glory bourgeon
From earthly blights and scars.
And now the mists are lifting —
The tides are rushing in —
'T is sunrise on the mountains! —
Lo! life is yet to win!

THE ROSE ENTHRONED.

It melts and seethes, the chaos that shall grow
To adamant beneath the house of life;
In hissing hatred atoms clash, and go
To meet intenser strife.

And ere that fever leaves the granite veins,
Down thunders over them a torrid sea:
Now Flood, now Fire, alternate despot reigns,
Immortal foes to be.

Built by the warring elements they rise,
The massive earth-foundations, tier on tier,
Where slimy monsters with unhuman eyes
Their hideous heads uprear.

The building of the world is not for you,
That glare upon each other, and devour!
Race floating after race fades out of view,
Till beauty springs from power.

Meanwhile from crumbling rocks and shoals of death
Shoots up rank verdure to the hidden sun;
The gulfs are eddying to the vague, sweet breath
Of richer life begun;

Richer and sweeter far than aught before,
Though rooted in the grave of what has been:
Unnumbered burials yet must heap Earth's floor
Ere she her heir shall win;

And ever nobler lives and deaths more grand,
For nourishment of that which is to come;
While mid the ruins of the work she planned,
Sits Nature, blind and dumb.

For whom or what she plans, she knows no more
Than any mother of her unborn child:
Yet beautiful forewarnings murmur o'er
Her desolations wild.

Slowly the clamor and the clash subside;
Earth's restlessness her patient hopes subdue;
Mild oceans shoreward heave a pulse-like tide;
The skies are veined with blue.

And life works through the growing quietness,
To bring some darling mystery into form:
Beauty her fairest Possible would dress
In colors pure and warm.

Within the depths of palpitating seas,
A tender tint, anon a line of grace,
Some lovely thought from its dull atom frees,
The coming joy to trace: —

A penciled moss on tablets of the sand,
Such as shall veil the unbudded maiden-blush
Of beauty yet to gladden the green land; —
A breathing, through the hush,

Of some sealed perfume longing to burst out,
And give its prisoned rapture to the air; —
A brooding hope, a promise through a doubt,
Is whispered everywhere.

And, every dawn a shade more clear, the skies
A flush as from the heart of heaven disclose:
Through earth and sea and air a message flies,
Prophetic of the Rose.

At last a morning comes, of sunshine still,
When not a dewdrop trembles on the grass,
When all winds sleep, and every pool and rill
Is like a burnished glass,

Where a long looked-for guest might lean to gaze;
When Day on Earth rests royally — a crown
Of molten glory, flashing diamond rays,
From heaven let lightly down.

In golden silence, breathless, all things stand;
What answer waits this questioning repose?
A sudden gush of light and odors bland,
And, lo, — the Rose! the Rose!

The birds break into canticles around;
The winds lift Jubilate to the skies;
For, twin-born with the rose on Eden-ground,
Love blooms in human eyes.

Life's marvelous queen-flower blossoms only so,
In dust of low ideals rooted fast:

Ever the Beautiful is moulded slow
From truth in errors past.

What fiery fields of Chaos must be won,
What battling Titans rear themselves a tomb,
What births and resurrections greet the sun
Before the Rose can bloom!

And of some wonder-blossom yet we dream
Whereof the time that is enfolds the seed;
Some flower of light, to which the Rose shall seem
A fair and fragile weed.

HAND IN HAND WITH ANGELS.

HAND in hand with angels,
Through the world we go;
Brighter eyes are on us
Than we blind ones know;
Tenderer voices cheer us
Than we deaf will own;
Never, walking heavenward,
Can we walk alone.

Hand in hand with angels,
In the busy street,
By the winter hearth-fires, —
Everywhere, — we meet,
Though unfledged and songless,
Birds of Paradise;
Heaven looks at us daily
Out of human eyes.

Hand in hand with angels;
Oft in menial guise;
By the same strait pathway
Prince and beggar rise.
If we drop the fingers,
Toil-embrowned and worn,
Then one link with heaven
From our life is torn.

Hand in hand with angels;
Some are fallen, — alas!
Soiled wings trail pollution
Over all they pass.
Lift them into sunshine,
Bid them seek the sky!
Weaker is your soaring,
When they cease to fly.

Hand in hand with angels;
Some are out of sight,
Leading us, unknowing,
Into paths of light.
Some dear hands are loosened
From our earthly clasp,
Soul in soul to hold us
With a firmer grasp.

Hand in hand with angels, —
'T is a twisted chain,
Winding heavenward, earthward,
Linking joy and pain.
There 's a mournful jarring,
There 's a clank of doubt,
If a heart grows heavy,
Or a hand 's left out.

Hand in hand with angels
Walking every day; —
How the chain may lengthen,
None of us can say.
But we know it reaches
From earth's lowliest one,
To the shining seraph,
Throned beyond the sun.

Hand in hand with angels;
Blessed so to be!
Helped are all the helpers;
Giving light, they see.
He who aids another
Strengthens more than one;
Sinking earth he grapples
To the Great White Throne.

EUREKA.

I RAN through a garden of roses at morning,
Uncaring the whither or why,
When, sudden as light, came a musical warning,
Thrilling over my heart like a sigh.
"Seek! seek!" one low word, and there followed no other:
I gathered a white lily-bell;
A doveling I caught, newly left by its mother;
I stooped for a pebble, a shell.
But just as a joyous "Eureka!" replied,
My dove flew away, and my white lily died;
My pebble and shell lost the light of the wave,
And "I have not found," was the answer I gave.

Then outward I sally, a fearless crusader,
With "Seek" for a herald and guide:
On Error's dominions I march, an invader;
Green laurels the promise of Pride.
Impatient Goliath is striding to battle;
My foes are but pygmies to-day;
"Eureka!" I shout, while the war-thunders rattle, —
The victor rides forth from the fray.
"Eureka!" why falters my tongue at the word?
Chimæra yields not to a mortal's dull sword:
Lo, giants arise from the blood of the slain!
Alike were the search and the struggle in vain.

Now bring my good staff, for the pilgrim sees yonder,
A Mecca, an altar of rest:
Beside that calm shrine I will seat me and ponder,
And be in my solitude blest.
There Peace shall bend over me, Peace, the white angel,
And Love, with her warm brooding wings:
Eureka! I hear it — a soothing evangel —
'T is gentle Reflection that sings.
Still cheated! Ixion still grasps at a cloud!
The white robe of Peace, — it is only a shroud!
My Mecca I leave; all in vain have I sought
The garden, the battle, the shrine; they are naught.

Now pausing, a wanderer restless yet weary,
"Seek! seek!" how it sounds, like a moan!
Ah, where? for around all is barren and dreary;
Beyond lies the dread, the unknown.
And upward — O joy! what a glory is breaking!
Why looked I not upward before?
My soul like a planet in sunlight is waking,
To suffer eclipse nevermore.
Eureka! all dazzled with splendor I stand;
Light upward and inward, a Father at hand,
A crown overhead that erelong I shall win; —
Eureka! the Kingdom of God is within!

PSYCHE AT SCHOOL.

Young Psyche came to school,
Down here in Being's lower vestibule,
Where many voices unto her did call,
"Welcome! be studious! and in Mammon's hall
Shalt thou cup-bearer be to Mammon-King."
Thought Psyche, "No such thing!"

A volume Pleasure brought,
Of glowing pictures in earth-colors wrought.

Temptation's alphabet in ambush lay
Among the leaves; but Psyche turned away,
And said, "Those tints are mixed with poisonous paint;
It makes me sick and faint."

Then one approached, called Love,
Whose fingers o'er illumined print did move.
Psyche looked on and sighed: "The page is vext;
Your notes and your translations mar the text.
The angels write Love's idioms on the heart;
They are not learned by art."

Pride took an ancient book,
To teach the high-bred air, the scornful look.
Psyche returned her gaze with meek surprise,
And said, "Mine are not glass, but real eyes,
And will not stare like dead men's; since I see,
I cannot learn of thee."

"The child rebels," said Pride,
"Now be the lash by some rough teacher plied."
Then Poverty her rudest blows did give;
Said Psyche, "Pain assures me that I live.
My robes are torn; but courage, faith, and love,
My triple mail I prove."

Grief brought a scroll, writ o'er
With ink of nightshade and of hellebore.
Its damps were rainbows under Psyche's smile.
Despair with black tome open stood the while,
But said, "Her eyes would make the page too bright,"
And stole away from sight.

A guest undid the gate;
One who expects no welcome, soon or late.
Then Psyche took the parchment that he bore,
And whispered, gliding by him through the door,
"Kind Death, best friend! 't is my diploma given;
A graduate for heaven."

THIRTY-FIVE.

THE sun hangs calm at summer's poise;
The earth lies bathed in shimmering noon,
At rest from all her cheerful noise,
With heartstrings silently in tune.

The time, how beautiful and dear,
When early fruits begin to blush,
And the full leafage of the year
Sways o'er them with a sheltering hush!

The clouds that fleck the warm, blue deep
Like shoals of tinted fishes float;
From breathless groves the birds asleep
Send now and then a dreaming note.

A traveller through the noonday calm,
Not weary, yet in love with rest,
Glad of the air's refreshing balm,
Stays where yon threshold waits a guest.

Her half-way house of life is this:
She sees the road wind up from far;
From the soft dells of childhood's bliss,
Where twinkles home's remembered star.

She feels that glimmer, out of sight;
A tender radiance of the past,
That drowned itself in deeper light;
A joy that Joy forbade to last.

O morn of Spring! O green, green fields!
Pressed by white feet of innocence!
The lilies that young verdure shields
Yet send a pure, faint sweetness thence.

Those lilies yet perfume her heart;
That morning lingers in her eye;
From God's first gifts she will not part,—
Half the sweet light she travels by.

Yet think not she would wander back
For childhood pure, or merrier youth.
A mist is on the fading track;
Here rounds the brightening orb of truth.

Nor painless can she look behind,
On pitfalls that she did not shun;
Sure paths her heart refused to find;
And guides that led her from the sun.

Then good seemed false, and evil true;
Now out of evil blossoms good;
Life maps into a broader view,
Its needed shadows understood.

Here at the half-way house of life,
Upon these summer highlands raised,
Her thoughts are quieted from strife,
Peace grows wherever she has gazed.

The spirit of the beauteous Now
She deeply quaffs, for future strength,

And forward leans her shaded brow
To scan the journey's waiting length.

Not down-hill all the afternoon;
Though hides the path in many a vale,
It upward winds to sunset soon;
To mountain summits far and pale.

Though lone those mountains seem, and cold,
To such as know not of her Guide,
He gently leads to Love's warm fold;
She sees them from their heaven-lit side.

And of the way that lies between,
The mystery is the loveliest thing.
All yet a miracle has been,
And life shall greater wonders bring.

The soul to God's heart moving on,
Owns but the Infinite for home;
Whatever with the past has gone,
The best is always yet to come.

'T will not be growing old, to feel
The spirit, like a child, led on
By unseen presences, that steal
For earth the light of heavenly dawn.

'T will not be terrible to bear
Of inward pain the heaviest blow,
Since thus the rock is smitten, where
Fountains of strength perennial flow.

To wait — to suffer — or to do;
Each key unlocks its own deep bliss;
For every grief a comfort new; —
A mine for gems the heart may miss.

Thus on she looks, with thoughts that sing
Of happy months that follow June:
Life were not a completed thing,
Without its summer afternoon;

Without its summery autumn hours; —
That softened, spiritual time,
When o'er bright woods and frost-born flowers
The seasons ring their perfect chime.

The time to bless and to be blest;
For gathering and bestowing fruit;
When grapes are waiting to be pressed,
And storms have fixed the tree's firm root.

Heaven's inmost sunshine earth has warmed;
Heaven's peace floods each dark mystery;
And all the present glows, transformed,
In the fair light of what shall be.

The traveller girds her to depart;
She turns her toward the setting sun:
With morning's freshness in her heart,
Her evening journey is begun.

SLEEP-SONG.

Hush the homeless baby's crying,
Tender Sleep!
Every folded violet
May the outer storm forget:
Those wet lids with kisses drying,
Through them creep!

Soothe the soul that lies thought-weary,
Murmurous Sleep;
Like a hidden brooklet's song,
Rippling gorgeous woods among,
Tinkling down the mountains dreary,
White and steep.

Breathe thy balm upon the lonely,
Gentle Sleep;
As the twilight breezes bless
With sweet scents the wilderness:
Ah, let warm, white dove-wings only
Round them sweep!

Touch the hoary head with blessing,
Holy Sleep,
Like a soft and ripening rain,
Falling on the yellow grain:
For the glare of suns oppressing,
Pitying weep!

On thy still seas met together,
Charmed Sleep;
Hear them swell a drowsy hymning,
Swans to silvery music swimming,
Floating with unruffled feather
O'er the deep!

SO LITTLE.

'T is little we can look for now;
  The summer years are past;
The air is thick with coming snow,
  And dead leaves, falling fast.
A lonelier sound is in the wind,
For withered roses left behind.

There was an Indian summer, sweet
  With blossoms, faint and few,
When fruits lay ripened at our feet;
  But that has faded, too:
Its joy was but the after-glow
Of sunsets crimsoned long ago.

And yet we never plucked the flowers
  That budded in our dreams:
Even at the best, this world of ours
  Is other than it seems:
A generous world indeed it is;
Most generous in its promises.

And with a golden promise still,
  It lures us travellers on
To death's white steep, the wintry hill
  Up which our friends have gone,
And vanished from our mortal sight —
Thank God! into no starless night.

Faint music from beyond that steep; —
  A rose-breath, far and rare: —
So little can we guess! — but deep
  Heart's faith is rooted there.
So little! — and yet so much more
Than we have hoped or dreamed before!

THREE OLD SAWS.

If the world seems cold to you,
  Kindle fires to warm it!
Let their comfort hide from view
  Winters that deform it.
Hearts as frozen as your own
  To that radiance gather:
You will soon forget to moan
  "Ah! the cheerless weather!"

If the world's a wilderness,
Go, build houses in it!
Will it help your loneliness
On the winds to din it?
Raise a hut, however slight;
Weeds and brambles smother;
And to roof and meal invite
Some forlorner brother.

If the world's a vale of tears,
Smile, till rainbows span it!
Breathe the love that life endears,
Clear of clouds to fan it!
Of your gladness lend a gleam
Unto souls that shiver;
Show them how dark Sorrow's stream
Blends with Hope's bright river!

A WORD WITH MY SOUL.

Soul, what wisdom hast thou won,
Since thine earth-house was begun,
From loss of precious things,
And fair refurnishings?
Of all the guests that came and went,
Leaving their calm or discontent?
From crumblings of decay,—
New openings unto day?

Wouldst thou, soul, escape thy Past?
Life's foundation holds it fast.
The purity, the sin,
Alike are grounded in:
Therefrom doth lovely leafage spring;
Thence creepeth mould and tottering.
Whatso lies stifled there
Bring boldly to the air!

Soul, no Past can shelter thee:
Pleasant though its rooms may be,
Opening unto earth,
Filled with bloom and mirth,
To-day thou dost in vain return
To kindle fires that will not burn:
As vainly shut its doors,
Or veil its haunted floors.

Soul, thou hast arisen now
To the Present's sunnier glow:
Thy windows are flung wide
To light, on every side:

Beloved comrades gather here,
For work, and company, and cheer:
Look in or out, and own
How fair thy world has grown!

Sayest thou, Soul, "Here will I live;
Peace enjoy, and blessings give?"—
Tarriers of a day,
Dear guests will not stay:
Wild winter comes: thy vines are bare:
Storm-beaten walls need large repair:
Night curtains thy glad room;
Shrouds thee in lonely gloom.

Build up, Soul, a lofty stair;
Build a room in healthier air!
Here there is no rest:
Better climbs to best.
Thy friends shall be the eternal stars;
They greet thee through thy casement bars:
Thy homesick feet they lead
Where thou no house wilt need.

Learn thou, Soul of mine, past doubt,
Thou canst all things do without:
All that through thy Past
Winds and clings so fast:
Sweet pictures hidden with a sigh,
As far too perfect to put by;
And all the wealth of thought
Into thy Present wrought.

From that height, Soul, thou shalt see,
In thy sky-tower, pluming thee
For unfettered flight
Through the fields of light,
The beauty of thine earthly nest,
As never, while it gave thee rest:
Yea, in thyself shalt find
Joy that seemed left behind.

THE WEEPING PROPHET.[1]

Woe, woe is me for my dear country's sin!
Woe, that a prophet's torch was given to me
To hold up, hid God's shadowing light within,
Before a people who refuse to see
How guilt draws down that light in burning levin;
How awful is the purity of Heaven.

[1] Suggested by Margaret Foley's bas-relief of the Prophet Jeremiah.

A boy among the hills of Anathoth
I saw the visionary caldron seethe,
The almond-tree its ominous blossoms wreathe,
In token that a righteous God was wroth
With Israel, and in judgment would condemn
The city of his love, Jerusalem.

To be his messenger of wrath I shrank:
I cried, "O Lord, I am a child, so weak!
Who bears a curse, none give God-speed, or thank."
Then did He touch my lips, his words I speak;
And, knowing that his eyes are on the truth,
I cannot answer evil ways with ruth.

Therefore I sit a mourner, and mine eyes
Pour day and night their heavy sorrows down.
My people pass me by, for they despise
His goodness, and with scoffs his warnings drown.
While overhead, in cloudy columns low,
The birds of prey that scent their ruin go.

Was ever any sorrow like to mine?
It is no selfish trouble that I weep,
O daughter of my people, but I keep
Vigil for thee, beneath the wrath divine,
The love that reddens into justice, when
God's perfect law is made the mock of men.

For, evermore, the tables of that law,
Broken by man, are back upon him hurled.
O virgin daughter, thee defiled I saw,
Wandering from Him, an outcast in the world,
Filthy without, and vile and crushed within;
A by-word through the ages for thy sin.

Alike in visions of the day and night,
A spectral presence, not to be shut out,
A bleeding shadow, chased by shame and doubt,
Hither and thither past me takes its flight
Into the unsheltering dark of east and west:
A phantom, yet in faded splendors drest.

For thou wert beautiful, Jerusalem!
Celestial colors wrapped thee at thy birth;
Kings pressed from far to kiss thy garment's h·m
Chosen of God, a glory in the earth!
Falling from such a height to such a deep,—
To be the prophet of thy doom I weep!

NATURE AND THE BOOK.

I HEARD one say but now: "Shut up the Book;
For Nature tells the story better still.
The fingered pages have a musty look;
The wide green margins of the mountain rill,
The running notes of ripples on the beach,
The open scroll of the blue firmament,
In loftier language the same lesson teach:
Will not the broader truth thy mind content?
The cover of thy book may be a door
To shut the elder gospel out of sight.
It tells thee only that which WAS before;
God said, ere it was writ, 'Let there be light!'
And light is everywhere, — around, within;
Earth luminous with heaven: what more wilt ask?
The Eternal Effluence is thy next of kin:
Lay clogs aside, and in full freedom bask."

The Book lay open on the window-sill,
And morning-glories leaned across the leaf
Whereon is written "Whosoever will," —
Also that story which hath lightened grief,
And dried within its source the mourner's tear, —
The story of a City built of light
Transmitted through all precious lustres clear,
Within whose gem-walled streets shall be no night!

The morning-glories let the sunrise through,
Shedding a various glow upon the Word:
With sumptuous lines of purple, red, and blue,
Familiar promises were underscored.
I read and mused until my heart spoke out:
"Nature saith 'Is,' but addeth not 'Shall be,'
Which God hath written here past any doubt;
The words that human eyes ached long to see.
We might have guessed it. Some, the saintly-strong
And clear of insight, know that unto life,
Which is of Him, his endless years belong,
And are at rest from inward questioning strife.

"But few live on the mountain-peaks of thought,
And fewer still keep holy instinct pure:
To sin, as unto weakness, hath He brought
This lamp, to make the homeward pathway sure.
Shall we blow out our torch, because the sun
Shone yesterday, and will to-morrow shine?
Too much of work remaineth to be done,
And every gleam we toil by, is divine.

"Wherefore should He permit these flowers to bloom,
That rays from earth's great luminary break?
Because to us its dazzling blaze were gloom:
Of ravelled rainbows beauty's web we make.
Jewel and blossom, shaded leaf and star
Give no full revelation of the light:
Colors but letters of an alphabet are,
Pointing us backward to the primitive white.
The common eye needs every tint and tone;
The soul of man, much more, God's faintest word.
His glory through our mortal thought hath shone;
When saint or prophet speaks, He still is heard:
And in the Revelation of the Book, —
For surely He most brother-like hath come, —
As in a mirror on his face we look,
So reassured, when Nature seemeth dumb.

"Yet will I listen to the ancient Voice,
Forever new, that speaks in wind and wave;
It *is* the self-same tale; let me rejoice
In joy that his bewildered children have,
For they are glad in Him, the God Unknown!
Oh, that they knew the sacred emphasis
The Word on Nature's loveliness has thrown,
And how the world by Christ's face lighted is, —
As if new sunshine brake into the air,
As if fresh odors burst from everything!
This Book is a wide window, opening fair
Into the splendors of immortal Spring:
Nor shall it now be shut again on earth
Until that City, the dear Bride, descends,
All souls resound the heavenly marriage-mirth,
And all the blindness sin has brought us ends."

THE LONG PRAYER.

FROM "AN IDYL OF WORK."

It was a meeting-going world wherein
My childhood found itself. The Sabbath sun
Warmed palsied footsteps up the windy slope,
Where rosy weanlings toddled breathlessly
In prints of patriarchal feet. It shone
Through lattice-work of apple-boughs in spring,
Stained with pink glory of bloom; on silver hair
And flaxen baby-ringlets; on the heads
Of youngsters awkward with strange consciousness
Of smoothness; and on brows demure
Of arch girls Sunday-prim.
The sun himself

Lost in the pews the look of every day —
His frolic look — was cool, sedate, and blank.
In the tall pulpit rose the minister,
And talked of dispensations and decrees,
Of covenants, purposes, and ordinances,
Saints' perseverance, the church-militant,
Till to my vague child-thought the way to heaven
Seemed somehow built of sounding sentences
That went up through the roof, and shaped themselves
Like rafters, beams, and rafters, endlessly.
Alas! I knew I should lose footing there!
The men and women, with grown minds, could climb;
But I, poor fledgling, fallen on the pew-floor,
Helpless and weak, the sky so very far,
And all that Babel-staging raised between, —
What would become of me? My young thoughts caught,
From tone and gesture, something earnest meant
For all of us; there would be some mishap,
Unless we all did something. Restlessly
My small life fluttered in its vast, bare cage,
Yet feared the terror hinted at outside.

And then they sung a hymn, that sometimes was
Squared to the preaching, like a scaffold-stair;
But sometimes lifted up my baby-soul,
And took it heavenward through the apple-boughs,
With birds and winds, and all the free, glad things
That worshipped in unconscious unrestraint, —
As in Thorwaldsen's sculpture, where the babes
Are borne through kingdoms of the Night and Day,
In mighty, motherly embrace.
But when
The words came, "Let us pray!" something in me
Awoke, and understood, and said, "Amen!"
But O the weary failure! That long prayer
Was like a toilsome journey round the world,
By Cathay and the Mountains of the Moon,
To come at our own door-stone, where He stood
Waiting to speak to us, the Father dear,
Who is not far from any one of us.

And yet, though baby-feet flagged in the way,
The hard, cold way of prayer those stern men chose,
Not for one moment did one thought in me
Doubt that there was a way, some path of prayer
By which I, too, could reach Him. And perhaps
The men and women standing up so straight,
With set, unwinking eyes, perhaps their thoughts
Stumbled like mine, sometimes. How could they go,
Step after measured step, as they were led,
Shaping their asking to the preacher's plan,
Without a side flight of their own?

God hears
The prayer the good man means, the soul's desire,
Under whatever rubbish of vain speech.
And prayer is, must be, each man's deepest word.
He who denies its power, still uses it
Whenever he names God, or thinks of Him.

If there be Better, — and the dream of it,
The longing for it, shows that there must be, —
It is not in ourselves; it is the God
Beyond, whom our souls seek; the search is prayer.
More life we ask, of Him who is the Life:
The reason why we pray is this: we must.

Therefore the breeze of memory brings to me
No sweeter echo than that Sabbath word
From pew and pulpit hid by apple-boughs
Among the years of childhood, "Let us pray!"
And therefore, though Philosophy forbid, —
Philosophy, the soul of whose germ-thought
Is God, the thought-inspirer; — therefore, though
Science forbid, closing the inward eye
To make the outward keener; putting Law,
God's vast, revealing shadow, for Himself, —
Still let the instinct of His presence speak,
That will take no denial; still let heart
Respond to heart, deep calling unto deep,
The voice of many waters, — "Let us pray!"

OLD SABBATH DAYS.

THE dear old Sabbath days,
The quiet Sabbath days of long ago!
Across these shadeless ways
The upstart mornings boldly come and go.
None lingers on our gaze, —
No Sabbath now will shine upon us so.

Those gentle days are gone,
At our unworthy doors their dust off-shaken.
No more that noiseless dawn,
For which no other dawn could be mistaken,
The reverent night withdrawn,
Looks at us with calm eyes, till we awaken.

If any straggler walked
Through the hushed town, he met a spirit there,
That with his conscience talked
In low upbraidings, murmured through the air:
The very wild birds flocked
To the safe shelter of the house of prayer.

The little ones, who went
By twos, in larger footprints, up the lane,
Paused as the shepherd bent
Crossed the worn threshold, leaning on his cane:
While the rich orchard-scent
Passed in and mingled with the psalm's clear strain.

The sun, slow moving round,
Looked from the bending heavens approval sweet.
There was no jarring sound;
The hours took off the sandals from their feet,
For earth seemed holy ground,—
A temple where the soul her God could meet.

But now the Sabbath sun
Shines quick and keen, as in the hurrying week;
And earthly noises stun
The spirit that would Heaven in silence seek.
The praise for hire is done,
While their own thoughts the people think and speak.

'T is true that every hour
Is sacred to the earnest worshipper,
And every humble flower
Is Nature's text, to those who wait on her:
But those old days had power
The sluggish soul's Bethesda-pool to stir.

The Sabbath day! how well
The Pilgrims loved it, for the peace it brought!
We in the shadow dwell
Of its pavilion, for our shelter wrought.
Why break our holiest spell?
Why count the good old Sabbath days for naught?

A WHITE SUNDAY.

I ENTERED not the church this good Lord's Day,
Albeit my heart was with the worshippers,
Who stood beneath the arched and frescoed roof,
And sang to Him arisen. The same song
I heard innumerable happy birds
Trilling outside my window, in the boughs,
Among the blossoms; and the blossoms sang,—
I dreamed it not,—"The Lord is risen indeed."
Surely there never fell so pure a light
From any crystalline cathedral-dome,
As that borne down with the soft summer rain
Through the pink apple-blooms, the lucid green
Of June's uncankered leaves, and branches gray,

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Scutcheoned with lichens, tracery more antique
Than earls or bishops bear upon their shields.

A color not of earth, a tenderness
Of spotless snow and rose-bloom, clothed the tree,
That stood up underneath the heavens, one flower.
The multitude that John saw in white robes,
Singing the Heart Divine whose living drops
Had cleansed their stains, and warmed them into life, —
That multitude looked through my window-panes,
And with them I joined praises.
Friends devout,
Who listen to the sermon, swell the hymn,
Also the Lord accepts my offering.
To-day I worship in the apple-boughs,
With the great congregation of the flowers
That come up to their heights, as came the tribes
Of old unto Mount Zion, once a year;
A Passover of perfect, open praise.

The world we live in wholly is redeemed;
Not man alone, but all that man holds dear:
His orchards and his maize; forget-me-not
And heart's-ease in his garden; and the wild
Aerial blossoms of the untamed wood,
That make its savagery so home-like; all
Have felt Christ's sweet love watering their roots:
His sacrifice has won both earth and heaven.
Nature, in all its fulness, is the Lord's.
There are no Gentile oaks, no Pagan pines;
The grass beneath our feet is Christian grass;
The wayside weed is sacred unto Him.
Have we not groaned together, herbs and men,
Struggling through stifling earth-weights unto light,
Earnestly longing to be clothed upon
With our high possibility of bloom?
And He, He is the Light, He is the Sun
That draws us out of darkness, and transmutes
The noisome earth-damp into Heaven's own breath,
And shapes our matted roots, we know not how,
Into fresh leaves and strong, fruit-bearing stems;
Yea, makes us stand, on some consummate day,
Abloom in white transfiguration-robes.

We are but human plants, with power to shut
In upon self our own impoverished lives,
Refusing light and growth. Unthankfully
We flaunt our blossoms in the face of heaven,
As if they overshone the eternal Sun
That is their inspiration; as if we
Sat in ourselves, and decked ourselves with flowers;
An infinite littleness of vanity.

My apple-tree, thou preachest better things;
Whispering from all thy multitudinous buds,
"To bloom is boundless freedom. It is life
From self enfranchised, opening every vein
To let in glory from above, and give
What we receive, in fragrance, color, fruit;
Life, which is Heaven's: ourselves dead matter, else."

Some good men say, "We need theology."
Others, "Not so, religion is enough."
What if both are mistaken, — and both right?
GOD is our need, a Presence and a Life.
Theology enthrones Him in the mind,
Yet sometimes leaves the heart as hard as stone,
The hands as lifeless. And Religion, too,
Is often only an ambiguous word
For transient fervor, or for duty cold,
Or vain, self-helpful works of charity.
Without Him thought is soulless; rapture blind;
Duty a lifelong bondage; love, thin air.
Through Him alone is man a living soul:
Through Him alone is earth the bride of heaven.

Here in Thy great world-garden, Lord, we stand:
And Thou, whose trees we are, who art our Sun,
Hast once descended to our roots of being,
And bloomed and breathed in our humanity,
That we might be as Thou, and know no death.
The life we live is Thine, not ours. We bloom
To gladden earth with sacrifice like Thine,
So clad in Thy white robes of righteousness.
Keep us! for here the blossoms blight so fast!
The fruit is flawed in turning from Thy beams
To the biting east, to folly and to sin.
And let all trees, the wildings of the wood,
And grafts of rarest culture, waft Thee praise!

My apple-tree, thy dome of rose and pearl
Will vanish on the morrow, like a dream.
Yet every spring, the springs when I am dead,
A tabernacle thou wilt build for men;
And they will look up through thee into heaven,
And hear the hum of bees among thy boughs,
A faint sky-music. I shall worship then,
With friends beloved, under other shade.
Are only palms in Eden? I shall miss
The tree whereby Eve fell, — if that thou wert, —
Not seeing it beside the River of Life.
Thou art too beautiful to be dropped out
Of human vision, even beatified.
There is no glory of the trees like thine,
Though there be many set in Paradise;
There must thou blossom also.

Dreams are lost
In guessing at the glory of thy boughs
In that immortal spring-time!
Ah! dear friends,
Sweet memories of the earth, and sad no more,
Will float around us in the air of heaven,
A fragrance and a melody, when we,
Young, glad, and all as if at home again,
Sit under our transplanted apple-trees.

SONNETS.

DROUGHT.

THERE is a trouble may befall the soul,
Beside which grief will seem a happiness.
The stream whose murmur evermore to bless
Your desert with bewildering music stole,
And over your waste borders did unroll
A weft of green, for beauty and for shade,
That in the wilderness a garden made —
Withdraws, drop after drop, its priceless dole;
And the sweet grasses that the wind sang through,
And all the star-eyed blossoms, droop and die,
Till your bare life lies open to the sky,
The wide, calm weariness of rainless blue,
Without a voice to babble its distress;
A barren, uncomplaining silentness.

SPRINGS IN THE DESERT.

And there is joy no music can express,
When in the empty channels of the heart
New springs of love from unknown sources start;
When all the desert-land of selfishness
That, parched and shrivelling in its own distress,
Sent not a drop to cheer the neighboring waste, —
Breaks into song, and, brimmed with happy haste,
Pours rill to rill, a suffering soil to bless.
O silent, burning hearts! of lonely things
Your lot is far the mournfullest, the worst.
But when your sands with cooling waters burst,
Each thought in welcome of that wonder sings,
"Spring up, O well! from God the fountain flows
That makes the desert blossom as the rose!"

THE SECRET.

WHAT selfishness asked for
Was vain:
What came for that asking
Brought pain.

Heaven's manna in keeping
Was spoiled:
All beauty self-seeking
Hath soiled.

Complacency blazoned
Dull dross.
No gain came of hoarding,
But loss.

Gain! none save the giver
Receives.
Yet who that old gospel
Believes?

Nor pauper nor beggar
Then be;
Nor niggard of bounty
Most free.

But one way is Godlike, —
To give.
Then pour out thy heart's blood,
And live!

"HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE."

O SCOFFER! He who from the cross
Looked down thy dark abysm of loss,
And knew His pain alone could win
Such souls as thine from gulfs of sin, —
His death-groan mournful echo gave:
"Myself I cannot save."

Words breathed in scorn, yet understood
By Him to bear a sense of good:
The secret of the glorious strife
Between the powers of death and life,
Love's deepest truth, — self-sacrifice, —
Hid in that mockery lies.

And he must understand it so
Who would relieve a brother's woe:
He cannot shun his own distress;
He hastes, with Christ-like earnestness,
Although the way be through his grave:
Himself he cannot save.

Some happy souls may pass along
The heavenward road with smile and song,
Through guileless infancy and youth
Linked in with followers of the truth;
And their unconsciousness of ill
But makes them lovelier still.

Their peaceful path is not for all:
Each must obey his separate call;
And he is of himself abhorred
Who flies the summons of the Lord:
Sailing from danger unto ease,
He sinks in unknown seas.

None longs so for yon vales of peace
As he whom war gives no release.
But exiles' chains his brethren wear;
He knows no rest they may not share;
For them all hardships he must brave:
Himself he cannot save.

Aye, through all pain and loneliness,
Where men are perilled, he must press
To rescue, crying, "Woe is me,
Resisting not the wrong I see!
If none uphold me, I must go,
Single, against the foe!"

And not the warrior-heart alone
The scoffer's word for truth has known.
The mourner, weeping out the night
For aliens from the one true Light;
The watcher by the bed of pain,
Who knows her watch is vain;

He who has felt his heaviest cross
Far lighter than another's loss;
He who can ask and bear the blow
That shelters any soul from woe,
Sees why that Death on Calvary
Life's beacon-light must be.

Ring, mournful echo, through the world!
Float, banner of the Cross, unfurled

To show the servant who would prove
His Master's joy of suffering love,
That, while Thy folds above him wave,
Himself he cannot save!

HYMN.

HEAVENLY Helper, Friend divine,
Friend of all men, therefore mine,
Let my heart as Thy heart be!
Breathe Thy living breath through me!

Only at Thy love's pure tide
Human thirst is satisfied:
He who fills his chalice there,
Fills, with thirstier souls to share.

Undefiled One, who dost win
All Thine own from paths of sin,
Never let me dread to go
Where is guilt, or want, or woe!

If another lose the way,
My feet also go astray:
Sleepless Watcher, lead us back,
Safe into the homeward track!

As a bird unto its nest,
Flies the tired soul to Thy breast.
Let not one an alien be!
Lord, we have no home but Thee!

"AS STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS."

As strangers, glad for this good inn,
Where nobler wayfarers have been;
Yet asking but a little rest:
Earth may not keep her spirit-guest.

As those whom no entangling bond
Must draw from life and love beyond:
Strangers to all that lures astray
From one plain path, the homeward way.

How must the pilgrim's load be borne?
With staggering limbs, and look forlorn?
His Guide chose all that load within:
There 's need of everything, but sin.

So, trusting Him whose love he knows,
Singing along the road he goes;
And nightly of his burden makes
A pillow till the morning breaks.

How thinks the pilgrim of his way?
As wanderers homesick and astray?
The starlight and the dew he sees;
He feels the blessing of the breeze;

The valley-shades, how cool and still!
What splendor from the beetling hill!
He longs to go; he loves to stay;
For God is both his Home and Way.

Strangers to sin! beloved of God!
Ye track with heaven-light earth's mean sod;
For, pilgrims dear, HE walks with you,
A Guide, — but once a Pilgrim too.

MONICA AND AUGUSTINE.[1]

IN the martyr Cyprian's chapel there was moaning through the night;
Monica's low prayer stole upward till it met the early light.
Till the dawn came, walking softly o'er the troubled sea without,
Monica for her Augustine wept the dreary watches out.

"Lord of all the holy martyrs! Giver of the crown of flame,
Set on hoary-headed Cyprian, who to Thee child-hearted came,
Hear me for my child of promise! Thou his erring way canst see;
Long from Thee a restless wanderer, must he go away from me?

"'T is for Thee, O God, a mother this her wondrous child would keep;
Through the ripening of his manhood Thou hast seen me watch and weep.
Tangled in the mesh of Mani, groping through the maze of sense,
Other, deadlier snares await him, if from me he wander hence.

"Thine he shall be, Lord; Thy promise brightens up my night of fears:
Faith beholds him at Thy altar, yet baptized with only tears;
For the angel of my vision, came he not from Thy right hand,
Whispering unto me, his mother, 'Where thou standest, he shall stand'?

"Saviour, Lord, whose name is Faithful, I am Thine, I rest on Thee:
And beside me in Thy kingdom I this wanderer shall see.

[1] From Saint Augustine's story of himself, in the *Confessions*.

Check the tide! hold still the breezes! for his soul's beloved sake,
Do not let him leave me! Keep him — keep him — lest my heart
should break!"

. . . . . .

Man must ask, and God will answer, yet we may not understand,
Knowing but our own poor language, all the writing of His hand:
In our meagre speech we ask Him, and He answers in His own;
Vast beyond our thought the blessing that we blindly judge is none.

When the sun rose from the water, Monica was on the shore;
Out of sight had dropped the vessel that afar Augustine bore.
Home she turned, her sad heart singing, underneath its load of care,
"Still I know Thy name is Faithful, O Thou God that hearest
prayer!"

. . . . . .

By the garden-beds of Ostia now together stand the twain,
Monica and her Augustine, gazing far across the main,
Toward the home-land of Numidia, hiding in the distance dim,
Where God parted them in sorrow, both to bring the nearer Him.

And the mother's prayer is answered, for their souls are side by
side,
Where His peace flows in upon them with a full, eternal tide:
And Augustine's thought is blending with the murmur of the sea;
"Bless Thee, Lord, that we are restless, till we find our rest in
Thee!"

And their talk, the son and mother, leaning out above the flowers,
Is like lapse of angel-music, linking heaven's enraptured hours.
Hushed is all the song of Nature; hushed is care, and passion's din,
In that hush they hear a welcome from the Highest: — "Enter in!"

"What new mercy has befallen? every earthly wish is gone;"
Monica half speaks, half muses; "Why should earthly life move on?
Ah! my son, what peace and gladness surging from this silence roll!
'T is the Eternal Deep that answers to the deep within my soul!

"Not a sigh of homesick longing moves the stillness of my heart;
In the light of this great glory, unto God would I depart.
Though more dear thou art than ever, standing at Heaven's gate with
me,
For the sweetness of His presence I could say farewell to thee."

. . . . . .

There 's a silent room in Ostia; tearless mourners by a bed:
Since the angels roused that sleeper, who shall weep, or call her dead?
Not beside the dust belovèd shall her exiled ashes lie;
She awaits her resurrection underneath a Roman sky.

Now Augustine in his bosom keeps the image of a saint,
Whose warm tears of consecration drop on thoughts of sinful taint.

In the home that knew him erring, a bewildered Manichee,
Minister at Truth's high altar, him that mother-saint shall see.

In the dreams of midnight, haunted by the ghosts of buried sins;
In the days of calm the spirit, struggling through temptation, wins;
Monica looks down upon him, joy to bless, and gloom beguile;
And the world can see Augustine clearer for that saintly smile.

Still the billows from Numidia seek the lovely Roman shore;
Though Augustine to his mother sailed long since the death-wave o'er,
Still his word sweeps down the ages like the surging of the sea:
"Bless Thee, Lord, that we are restless, till we find our rest in Thee!"

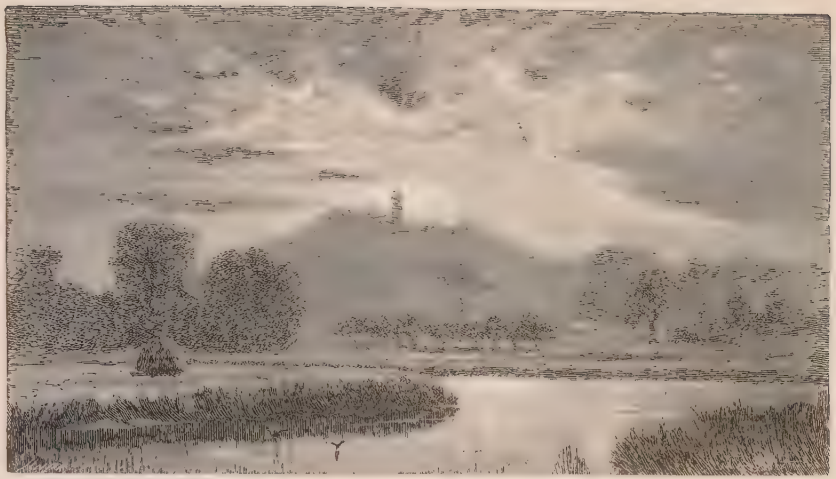
A THANKSGIVING.

For the wealth of pathless forests,
  Whereon no axe may fall;
For the winds that haunt the branches;
  The young bird's timid call;
For the red leaves dropped like rubies
  Upon the dark green sod;
For the waving of the forests,
  I thank thee, O my God!

For the sound of waters gushing
  In bubbling beads of light;
For the fleets of snow-white lilies
  Firm-anchored out of sight;
For the reeds among the eddies;
  The crystal on the clod;
For the flowing of the rivers,
  I thank Thee, O my God!

For the rosebud's break of beauty
  Along the toiler's way;
For the violet's eye that opens
  To bless the new-born day;
For the bare twigs that in summer
  Bloom like the prophet's rod;
For the blossoming of flowers,
  I thank Thee, O my God!

For the lifting up of mountains,
  In brightness and in dread;
For the peaks where snow and sunshine
  Alone have dared to tread;
For the dark of silent gorges,
  Whence mighty cedars nod;
For the majesty of mountains,
  I thank Thee, O my God!



"For the gold fringed clouds that curtain
Heaven's inner mystery." Page 75.

For the splendor of the sunsets,
Vast mirrored on the sea;
For the gold-fringed clouds, that curtain
Heaven's inner mystery;
For the molten bars of twilight,
Where thought leans, glad, yet awed;
For the glory of the sunsets,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the earth, and all its beauty;
The sky, and all its light;
For the dim and soothing shadows
That rest the dazzled sight;
For unfading fields and prairies,
Where sense in vain has trod;
For the world's exhaustless beauty,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For an eye of inward seeing;
A soul to know and love;
For these common aspirations,
That our high heirship prove;
For the hearts that bless each other
Beneath Thy smile, Thy rod;
For the amaranth saved from Eden,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the hidden scroll, o'erwritten
With one dear Name adored;
For the Heavenly in the human;
The Spirit in the Word;
For the tokens of Thy presence
Within, above, abroad;
For Thine own great gift of Being,
I thank Thee, O my God!

WISH AND PRAYER.

A PRAYER is in my thoughts to-night
I hardly dare to say:
"Lord, put my wishes all to flight,
Nor let me have my way!"

I dare not say it, Lord, for fear
My heart I may mistake;
So many earthly things are dear,
Perhaps, for earth's own sake.

Nor can I think that Thou art glad
In life despoiled of bloom,

BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

Since for all joy the worlds have had
  Thyself hast opened room.

And yet the poison-plant, so fair,
  So like the wholesome grows,
To pluck my flower I will not dare,
  But trust His hand who knows.

And this, indeed, is life's best thing —
  To take sweet gifts from Thee!
If Thou some dark, sealed bud shouldst bring,
  It must hold light for me.

In sadness I withheld my prayer,
  Hid under trembling fear;
In praise it blossoms, unaware,
  Because the sun is near.

My heart Thou wilt not crush or chill:
  "Lead into Thine my way!
Through all my wishes breathe Thy will!"
  This prayer to-night I say.

BURDENED.

No burden ever had I
  That I would not have had;
Though times there were when I thought never again
  To look up to heaven and be glad.
For, groaning and struggling on
  With the throngs that laden go,
I saw, by the pack on my neighbor's back,
  That mine was the lighter woe.

Unladen, heedless, unbent,
  I never had known
That the fardel borne by each wight forlorn
  Held something that was my own;
Something he bore for me
  With a patient ignorance,
While my footsteps lay as a blur on his way,
  And hindered his soul's advance.

Just it was that on me
  Some sorrow should fall;
No trouble alone is the trouble of one,
  But each has a share in all.
And if on my aching neck
  Another his burden laid,
Strength given for his day then he threw away,
  Wherewith I was stronger made.

I know that we are not here
For our selfish ease;
The kingliest One that the earth has known
Lived not Himself to please.
And they who have learned of Him
How a burden can give rest,
And joyfully share the great human care, —
They have learned life's secret best.

DIVINE AND HUMAN.

JESUS, Saviour, Friend most dear!
Dwell Thou with us daily here!
By Thine own life teach us this —
How divine the human is!

One with God, as heart with heart,
Saviour, lift us where Thou art!
Join us to His life, through Thine,
Human still, though all divine!

OUR PRAYERS.

ART Thou not weary of our selfish prayers?
Forever crying, "Help me, save me, Lord!"
We stay fenced in by petty fears and cares,
Nor hear the song outside, nor join its vast accord.

And yet the truest praying is a psalm:
The lips that open in pure air to sing,
Make entrance to the heart for health and balm;
And so life's urn is filled at heaven's all-brimming spring.

Is not the need of other souls our need?
After desire the helpful act must go,
As the strong wind bears on the winged seed
To some bare spot of earth, and leaves it there to grow.

Still are we saying, "Teach us how to pray"?
O teach us how to love! and then our prayer
Through other lives will find its upward way,
As plants together seek and find sweet life and air.

Thy large bestowing makes us ask for more:
Prayer widens with the world wherethrough love flows.
Needy, though blest, we throng before Thy door:
Let in Thy sunshine, Lord, on all that lives and grows!

AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

LORD, open the door, for I falter,
I faint in this stifled air;
In dust and straitness I lose my breath;
This life of self is a living death:
Let me into Thy pastures broad and fair,
To the sun and the wind from Thy mountains free;
Lord, open the door to me!

There is holier life, and truer,
Than ever my heart has found:
There is nobler work than is wrought within
These walls so charred by the fires of sin,
Where I toil like a captive blind and bound:
An open door to a freer task
In Thy nearer smile, I ask.

Yet the world is Thy field, Thy garden;
On earth art Thou still at home.
When Thou bendest hither Thy hallowing eye,
My narrow work-room seems vast and high,
Its dingy ceiling a rainbow dome.
Stand ever thus at my wide-swung door,
And toil will be toil no more!

Through the rosy portals of morning,
Now the tides of sunshine flow.
O'er the blossoming earth and the glistening sea,
The praise Thou inspirest rolls back to Thee:
Its tones through the infinite arches go;
Yet, crippled and dumb, behold me wait,
Dear Lord, at the Beautiful Gate!

I wait for Thy hand of healing;
For vigor and hope in Thee.
Open wide the door, — let me feel the sun, —
Let me touch Thy robe! — I shall rise and run
Through Thy happy universe, safe and free,
Where in and out Thy beloved go,
Nor want nor wandering know.

Thyself art the Door, Most Holy!
By Thee let me enter in!
I press toward Thee with my failing strength:
Unfold Thy love in its breadth and length!
True life from Thine let my spirit win!
To the saints' fair City, the Father's Throne,
Thou, Lord, art the way alone.

From the deeps of unseen glory
Now I feel the flooding light.
O rare sweet winds from Thy hills that blow!
O River so calm in its crystal flow!
O Love unfathomed — the depth, the height!
What joy wilt Thou not unto me impart,
When Thou shalt enlarge my heart!

To be made with Thee one spirit,
Is the boon that I lingering ask:
To have no bar 'twixt my soul and Thine;
My thoughts to echo Thy will divine;
Myself Thy servant, for any task. —
Life! life! I may enter, through Thee, the Door,
Saved, sheltered forevermore!

MY ANGEL-DRESS.

HEAVENLY Father, I would wear
Angel-garments, white and fair:
Angel-vesture undefiled
Wilt Thou give unto Thy child?

Not a robe of many hues,
Such as earthly fathers choose;
Discord weaves the gaudy vest:
Not in such let me be drest.

Take the raiment soiled away
That I wear with shame to-day:
Give my angel-robe to me,
White with heavenly purity!

Take away my cloak of pride,
And the worthless rags 't would hide:
Clothe me in my angel-dress,
Beautiful with holiness!

Perfume every fold with love,
Hinting heaven where'er I move;
As an Indian vessel's sails
Whisper of her costly bales.

Let me wear my white robes here,
Even on earth, my Father dear,
Holding fast Thy hand, and so
Through the world unspotted go.

Let me now my white robes wear:
Then I need no more prepare,

All apparelled for my home
Whensoe'er Thou callest, "Come!"

Thus apparelled, I shall be
As a signal set for Thee,
That the wretched and the weak
May the same fair garments seek.

"Buy of Me," I hear Thee say:
I have naught wherewith to pay,
But I give myself to Thee;
Clothed, adopted I shall be.

"FOLLOW THOU ME."

O WHERE shall we follow Thee, Saviour beloved?
To Kedron, where oft Thou hast thoughtfully roved?
— Each rill of enjoyment that winds through our care
Is Kedron, if Thou wilt but walk with us there.

O where shall we follow Thee, Jesus, our Friend?
To Bethany, whither Thy feet loved to tend?
— Our fireside is Bethany, peaceful and blest;
And ne'er will we wander, with Thee for a guest.

O where shall we follow Thee, Master adored?
To the Beautiful City that knew not her Lord?
— Alas for our streets, full of evil and pain!
Toil with us for cities wept over in vain!

O where shall we follow Thee, Leader Divine?
To Tabor, where Thou in white glory didst shine?
— Thy face in the sin-sick and weary we see,
When Love is the Tabor we stand on with Thee.

O where shall we follow Thee, tenderest Guide?
To the sweet, mournful garden down Olivet's side?
— Ah, here is Gethsemane — here, where we mourn:
Here strengthen us, Thou who our sorrow hast borne!

O where shall we follow Thee, dear Lamb of God?
Up Golgotha's death-steep, for us meekly trod?
— The thorns pierce our temples; the cross bears us down;
Like Thine, make our Calvary-garland our crown!

O where shall we follow Thee, conquering Lord?
To Paradise, unto us outcasts restored?
'T is Paradise, Lord, in Thy presence to be;
And, living or dying, we are ever with Thee!

THY WILL BE DONE.

ONLY silently resigned
To the counsels of Thy mind;
Willing, yet rejoicing not,
That Thy purpose shall be wrought;

Is this truly to submit?
Folding placid hands, to sit,
While innumerable feet
Thy triumphant coming meet?

Shall we say, "Thy will be done!"
And on our own errands run?
Vain and evil the design
We pursue, apart from Thine.

Teach us how to live this prayer;
Reverently Thy plans to share!
More than echoes of Thy voice,
Make us partners in Thy choice!

Lift us up to catch from Thee
World-encircling sympathy:
Ardor, strength, and courage give;
As Thou livest, let us live!

Let our deeds be syllables
Of the prayer our spirit swells:
In us Thy desire fulfil!
By us work Thy gracious will!

THE STILL HOUR.

THE quiet of a shadow-haunted pool,
  Where light breaks through in glorious tenderness;
Where the tranced pilgrim in the shelter cool
    Forgets the way's distress;

Such is this hour, this silent hour with Thee!
  The trouble of the restless heart is still,
And every swaying wish breathes reverently
    The whisper of Thy will.

Father, our thoughts are rushing wildly on,
  Tumultuous, clouded with their own vain strife;
Darkened by cares from our own planting grown;
    We call the tumult life.

And something of Thy Presence still is given:
The keen light flashing from the seething foam,
Through tangled boughs the sudden glimpse of heaven,
From Thee, Thee only, come.

And beautiful it is to catch Thy smile
Amid the rush, the hurrying flow of mind;
To feel Thy glance upon us all the while,
Most Holy and most Kind!

But oh! this hour of heavenly quietness,
When, as a lake that opens to the sky,
The soul, serene in its great blessedness,
Looks up to meet Thine eye!

Fountain of Life, in Thee alone is Light!
Shine through our being, cleansing us of sin,
Till we grow lucid with Thy Presence bright —
The peace of God within.

Yet not alone as Light pervading come; —
O Thou Divine One, meet us as a Friend!
Only with Thee is every heart at home:
Stay with us to the end!

By the stream's windings let us with Thee talk
Of this strange earth-life Thou so well hast known;
In Thy fresh footprints let us heavenward walk,
Groping no more alone!

If in our thoughts, by Thee made calm and clear,
The brightening image of Thy face we see,
What hour of all our lives can be so dear
As this still hour with Thee!

HEAVEN'S NEED.

Ye who, passing, bore away
Best of sunshine from our day;
That rare glory which revives
On the sky of clouded lives,
When, through mists at evening rent,
Rays from inmost heaven are sent;
What of earth to you remains,
Mid imperishable gains?

Mother-love, unchilled by change,
Absence wide, and coldness strange,
Mother-love, that here must yearn
Vainly for its full return

From the shallow heart of youth;
Art requited now, in truth?
Or does thy dumb longing go
Through heaven's happy overflow?

Sister-love, so calm, so wise!
Starlight, risen on darkened skies;
Heart that made its rifled nest
Shelter for the homeless guest;
Of thy tenderness bereft,
Little warmth in life is left:
Has that new world's flood of bliss
Swept apart the ties of this?

None may name a drearier thought:
Hearts we lean on need us not!
If they ask for us no more,
Gathering in heaven's affluent store,
Life is lonelier than we knew;
Sharper anguish thrills death through.
In this rubbish-heap of earth
Hides no pearl heaven's saving worth?

God is good. His face they see,
And are glad eternally.
Yet they hear love's wordless prayer,
Sigh that stirs the peaceful air,
And our yearning secret tells
To the bending asphodels.
Lacks one drop their cup to fill;
Still they want us, wait us still!

THE CITY LIGHTS.

UNDERNEATH the stars the houses are awake;
Upward comes no sound my silent watch to break.
Night has hid the street, with all its motley sights;
Miles around, afar, shine out the city lights:

Stars that softly glimmer in a lower sky,
Dearer than the glories unexplored on high;
Home-stars, that, like eyes, are glistening through the dark,
With a human tremor wavers every spark.

Glittering lamps above and twinkling lamps below;
The remote, strange splendor, the familiar glow:
One Eye, looking downward from creation's dome,
Sees in both, his children's window-lights of home.

Who have dwellings there, in avenues of space?
Whose clear torches kindle through the vague sky-place?
Are they holding tapers, us, astray, to guide,
Spirit-pioneers, who lately left our side?

Never drops an answer from those worlds unknown:
Yet no ray is shining for itself alone.
Hints of heaven gleam upward, through our earthly nights;
Tremulous with pathos are the city lights: —

Tremulous with pathos of a half-told tale:
Though therein hope flickers, burning low and pale,
It shall win completeness perfect as the sun:
Broken rays shall mingle, earth and heaven be one.

THE CHAMBER CALLED PEACE.[1]

On a hill-top, divested of trouble, I rested,
One blue, starry night,
In a fair eastern chamber, where vines strove to clamber
And play in the light.
There star-beams, uncertain, crept down through a curtain
Of thin, airy fleece;
There, veiling her brightness in silvery whiteness,
The moonlight, caressing, stole in with a blessing,
To the chamber called Peace.

The mountains surrounding, with radiance abounding,
In the broad blaze of day,
Encircled my spirit, to strengthen and cheer it,
When the night-purple lay
Like a mantle upon them, and silence had won them,
Bold prophets, to cease
From their unfinished story of Infinite Glory:
But its echo, low-breathing, like incense came wreathing
The chamber called Peace.

Though dripping November had quenched the last ember
Of autumn's red fire,
A presence enchanted the forest yet haunted;
It could not expire:
It lit the leaves, flying from winds feebly sighing
For summer's decease;
Touched the birches white-fingered, that silently lingered,
Where pine-choirs were sending an anthem unending
Through the chamber called Peace.

[1] "The Pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun rising: the name of the chamber was Peace." — Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

In a still flood of amber, Dawn entered the chamber,
The sleeper to rouse.
A rose-cloud passed slowly — a messenger holy,
At pause for the vows
Of pilgrims awaking; — then lifting and breaking
From a rich, robing fleece,
Like an Eye fondly glowing, a Heart overflowing,
The sun, proud and tender, lit up with full splendor
The chamber called Peace.

In that white, wayside dwelling, one pilgrim was swelling
Her heavenward lay:
The strength of the mountains, the joy of their fountains,
Had gladdened her stay:
The pine-trees' deep sighing, the wind's low replying,
For her soon would cease;
But a holier singing the angels were bringing
To her dawn-lighted chamber, all whiteness and amber,
Her chamber called Peace.

O, joy was it, staying where angels were playing
The sweet airs of heaven
To one blest immortal, whose rest at the portal
Half open, was given.
While we, scarcely grieving, awaited her leaving,
Her hour of release,
Hills and heavens around us, like walls seemed to bound us,
Of a Home all unblighted, a Mansion love-lighted,
A chamber called Peace.

For, on earth or in heaven, to true hearts is given
One quiet abode;
One mighty Arm guards them, one blessing rewards them, —
The Presence of God!
The stars in declining fail not of their shining,
Through daylight's increase:
They who pass on before us leave dawn breaking o'er us,
Lighting up, through death's grating, our chamber of waiting,
Our chamber called Peace.

A YEAR IN HEAVEN.

One year among the angels, beloved, thou hast been;
One year has heaven's white portal shut back the sound of sin:
And yet no voice, no whisper, comes floating down from thee,
To tell us what glad wonder a year of heaven may be.

Our hearts before it listen — the beautiful closed gate:
The silence yearns around us; we listen and we wait.
It is thy heavenly birthday, on earth thy lilies bloom;
In thine immortal garland canst find for these no room?

Thou lovedst all things lovely when walking with us here;
Now, from the heights of heaven, seems earth no longer dear?
We cannot paint thee moving in white-robed state afar,
Nor dream our flower of comfort a cool and distant star.

Heaven is but life made richer: therein can be no loss:
To meet our love and longing thou hast no gulf to cross;
No adamant between us uprears its rocky screen;
A veil before us only; thou in the light serene.

That veil 'twixt earth and heaven a breath might waft aside;
We breathe one air, beloved, we follow one dear Guide:
Passed in to open vision, out of our mists and rain,
Thou seest how sorrow blossoms, how peace is won from pain.

And half we feel thee leaning from thy deep calm of bliss,
To say of earth, "Beloved, how beautiful it is!
The lilies in this splendor — the green leaves in this dew; —
O, earth is also heaven, with God's light clothed anew!"

So, when the sky seems bluer, and when the blossoms wear
Some tender, mystic shading we never knew was there,
We 'll say "We see things earthly by light of sainted eyes;
She bends where we are gazing, to-day, from Paradise."

Because we know thee near us, and nearer still to Him
Who fills thy cup of being with glory to the brim,
We will not stain with grieving our fair, though fainter light,
But cling to thee in spirit as if thou wert in sight.

And as in waves of beauty the swift years come and go,
Upon celestial currents our deeper life shall flow,
Hearing, from that sweet country where blighting never came,
Love chime the hours immortal, in earth and heaven the same.

BY THE FIRESIDE.

WHAT is it fades and flickers in the fire,
Mutters and sighs, and yields reluctant breath,
As if in the red embers some desire,
Some word prophetic burned, defying death?

Lords of the forest, stalwart oak and pine,
Lie down for us in flames of martyrdom:
A human, household warmth, their death-fires shine;
Yet fragrant with high memories they come;

Bringing the mountain-winds that in their boughs
Sang of the torrent, and the plashy edge
Of storm-swept lakes; and echoes that arouse
The eagles from some splintered eyrie-ledge;

And breath of violets sweet about their roots;
  And earthy odors of the moss and fern;
And hum of rivulets; smell of ripening fruits;
  And green leaves that to gold and crimson turn.

What clear Septembers fade out in a spark!
  What rare Octobers drop with every coal!
Within these costly ashes, dumb and dark,
  Are hid spring's budding hope, and summer's soul.

Pictures far lovelier smoulder in the fire,
  Visions of friends who walked among these trees,
Whose presence, like the free air, could inspire
  A winged life and boundless sympathies.

Eyes with a glow like that in the brown beech,
  When sunset through its autumn beauty shines;
Or the blue gentian's look of silent speech,
  To heaven appealing as earth's light declines;

Voices and steps forever fled away
  From the familiar glens, the haunted hills,—
Most pitiful and strange it is to stay
  Without you in a world your lost love fills.

Do you forget us — under Eden-trees
  Or in full sunshine on the hills of God —
Who miss you from the shadow and the breeze,
  And tints and perfumes of the woodland sod?

Dear for your sake the fireside where we sit
  Watching these sad, bright pictures come and go;
That waning years are with your memory lit,
  Is now the lonely comfort that we know.

Is it all memory? Lo, these forest-boughs
  Burst on the hearth into fresh leaf and bloom;
Waft a vague, far-off sweetness through the house,
  And give close walls the hill-side's breathing-room.

A second life, more spiritual than the first,
  They find, a life won only out of death.—
O sainted souls, within you still is nursed
  For us a flame not fed by mortal breath!

Unseen, you bring to us, who love and wait,
  Freshness of heavenly hills, immortal air!
No flood can quench your heart's warmth, or abate:
  Ye are our gladness, here and everywhere.

NEAR SHORE.

THE seas of thought are deep and wide;
Let those who will, O friend of mine,
Sail forth without a chart or guide,
Or plummet-line;

A blank of waters all around;
A blank of azure overhead;
An infinite of nothing found,
Whence faith has fled.

The Name that we with reverence speak,
Echoes across those wastes of thought;
But they who go far off to seek,
They hear it not.

The shores give back its sweetest sound
From rivulet cool, and shadowing rock,
And voices that calm hearths surround
With friendly talk.

Earth is our little island home,
And heaven the neighboring continent,
Whence winds to every inlet come
With balmiest scent.

And tenderest whispers thence we hear
From those who lately sailed across.
They love us still; since heaven is near,
Death is not loss.

From mountain slopes of breeze and balm,
What melodies arrest the oar!
What memories ripple through the calm!
We 'll keep near shore.

By sweet home instincts wafted on,
By all the hopes that life has nursed,
We hasten where the loved have gone,
Who landed first.

If God be God, then heaven is real:
We need not lose ourselves and Him
In some vast sea of the ideal,
Dreamy and dim.

He cheats not any soul. He gave
Each being unity like His;
Love, that links beings, He must save;
Of Him it is.

Dear friend, we will not drift too far
  Mid billows, fogs, and blinding foam,
To see Christ's beacon-light — the star
  That guides us home.

Moving towards heaven, we 'll meet half-way
  Some pilot from that unseen strand;
Then, anchoring safe in perfect day,
  Tread the firm land.

Thence onward and forever on
  Toward summits piled on summits bright:
The lost are found, and we have won
  The Land of Light!

God is that country's glory: He
  Alike the confidence is found,
Of those who try the uncertain sea,
  Or solid ground.

Yet we, for love of those who bend
  From yon clear heights, passed on before
To wait our coming, — we, dear friend,
  Will keep near shore.

ACROSS THE RIVER.

When for me the silent oar
  Parts the Silent River,
And I stand upon the shore
  Of the strange Forever,
Shall I miss the loved and known?
Shall I vainly seek mine own?

Mid the crowd that come to meet
  Spirits sin-forgiven, —
Listening to their echoing feet
  Down the streets of heaven, —
Shall I know a footstep near
That I listen, wait for here?

Then will one approach the brink
  With a hand extended,
One whose thoughts I loved to think
  Ere the veil was rended;
Saying, "Welcome! we have died,
And again are side by side?"

Saying, "I will go with thee,
  That thou be not lonely,

To yon hills of mystery:
  I have waited only
Until now, to climb with thee
Yonder hills of mystery."

Can the bonds that make us here
  Know ourselves immortal,
Drop away, like foliage sear,
  At life's inner portal?
What is holiest below
Must forever live and grow.

I shall love the angels well,
  After I have found them
In the mansions where they dwell,
  With the glory round them:
But at first, without surprise,
Let me look in human eyes.

Step by step our feet must go
  Up the holy mountain;
Drop by drop, within us flow,
  Life's unfailing fountain.
Angels sing with crowns that burn;
We shall have our song to learn.

He who on our earthly path
  Bids us help each other —
Who his Well-beloved hath
  Made our Elder Brother —
Will but clasp the chain of love
Closer, when we meet above.

Therefore dread I not to go
  O'er the Silent River.
Death, thy hastening oar I know;
  Bear me, thou Life-giver,
Through the waters, to the shore,
Where mine own have gone before!

MORE LIFE.

Not weary of Thy world,
So beautiful, O Father, in Thy love, —
Thy world, that, glory-lighted from above,
  Lies in Thy hand impearled:

Not asking rest from toil;
Sweet toil, that draws us nearer to Thy side;
Ever to tend Thy planting satisfied,
  Though in ungenial soil:

Nor to be freed from care,
That lifts us out of self's lone hollowness;
Since unto Thy dear feet we all may press,
And leave our burdens there:

But oh, for health, for strength!
A life untainted by the curse of sin,
That spreads no vile contagion from within;
Found without spot, at length!

For power, and stronger will
To pour out love from the heart's inmost springs;
A constant freshness for all needy things;
In blessing, blessed still!

Oh to be clothed upon
With the white radiance of a heavenly form!
To feel the winged Psyche quit the worm,
Life, life eternal won!

Oh to be free, heart-free
From all that checks the right endeavor here!
To drop the weariness, the pain, the fear!
To know death cannot be!

Oh but to breathe in air
Where there can be no tyrant and no slave;
Where every thought is pure, and high, and brave,
And all that is, is fair!

More life! the life of heaven!
A perfect liberty to do Thy will:
Receiving all from Thee, and giving still,
Freely as Thou hast given!

More life! a prophecy
Is in that thirsty cry, if read aright:
Deep calleth unto deep: Life Infinite,
O soul, awaiteth thee!

WAR-MEMORIES.

THE NINETEENTH OF APRIL.

1861.

THIS year, till late in April, the snow fell thick and light:
Thy truce-flag, friendly Nature, in clinging drifts of white,
Hung over field and city: now everywhere is seen,
In place of that white quietness, a sudden glow of green.

The verdure climbs the Common, beneath the leafless trees,
To where the glorious Stars and Stripes are floating on the breeze.
There, suddenly as spring awoke from winter's snow-draped gloom,
The Passion-Flower of Seventy-Six is bursting into bloom.

Dear is the time of roses, when earth to joy is wed,
And garden-plat and meadow wear one generous flush of red;
But now in dearer beauty, to her ancient colors true,
Blooms the old town of Boston in red and white and blue.

Along the whole awakening North are those bright emblems spread;
A summer noon of patriotism is burning overhead:
No party badges flaunting now, no word of clique or clan;
But "Up for God and Union!" is the shout of every man.

Oh, peace is dear to Northern hearts; our hard-earned homes more dear;
But Freedom is beyond the price of any earthly cheer;
And Freedom's flag is sacred; he who would work it harm,
Let him, although a brother, beware our strong right arm!

A brother! ah, the sorrow, the anguish of that word!
The fratricidal strife begun, when will its end be heard?
Not this the boon that patriot hearts have prayed and waited for;—
We loved them, and we longed for peace: but they would have it war.

Yes; war! on this memorial day, the day of Lexington,
A lightning-thrill along the wires from heart to heart has run.

Brave men we gazed on yesterday, to-day for us have bled:
Again is Massachusetts blood the first for Freedom shed.

To war, — and with our brethren, then, — if only this can be!
Life hangs as nothing in the scale against dear Liberty!
Though hearts be torn asunder, for Freedom we will fight:
Our blood may seal the victory, but God will shield the Right!

THE SINKING OF THE MERRIMACK.

MAY, 1862.

GONE down in the flood, and gone out in the flame!
What else could she do, with her fair Northern name?
Her font was a river whose last drop is free:
That river ran boiling with wrath to the sea,
To hear of her baptismal blessing profaned:
A name that was Freedom's, by treachery stained.

'T was the voice of our free Northern mountains that broke
In the sound of her guns, from her stout ribs of oak:
'T was the might of the free Northern hand you could feel
In her sweep and her moulding, from topmast to keel:
When they made her speak treason, (does Hell know of worse?)
How her strong timbers shook with the shame of her curse!

Let her go! Should a deck so polluted again
Ever ring to the tread of our true Northern men?
Let the suicide-ship thunder forth, to the air
And the sea she has blotted, her groan of despair!
Let her last heat of anguish throb out into flame!
Then sink them together, — the ship and the name!

WEAVING.

ALL day she stands before her loom;
The flying shuttles come and go:
By grassy fields, and trees in bloom,
She sees the winding river flow:
And fancy's shuttle flieth wide,
And faster than the waters glide.

Is she entangled in her dreams,
Like that fair weaver of Shalott,
Who left her mystic mirror's gleams,
To gaze on light Sir Lancelot?
Her heart, a mirror sadly true,
Brings gloomier visions into view.

"I weave, and weave, the livelong day:
The woof is strong, the warp is good:
I weave, to be my mother's stay;
I weave, to win my daily food:
But ever as I weave," saith she,
"The world of women haunteth me.

"The river glides along, one thread
In nature's mesh, so beautiful!
The stars are woven in; the red
Of sunrise; and the rain-cloud dull.
Each seems a separate wonder wrought;
Each blends with some more wondrous thought.

"So, at the loom of life, we weave
Our separate shreds, that varying fall,
Some stained, some fair; and, passing, leave
To God the gathering up of all,
In that full pattern, wherein man
Works blindly out the eternal plan.

"In his vast work, for good or ill,
The undone and the done he blends:
With whatsoever woof we fill,
To our weak hands His might He lends,
And gives the threads beneath His eye
The texture of eternity.

"Wind on, by willow and by pine,
Thou blue, untroubled Merrimack!
Afar, by sunnier streams than thine,
My sisters toil, with foreheads black;
And water with their blood this root,
Whereof we gather bounteous fruit.

"I think of women sad and poor;
Women who walk in garments soiled:
Their shame, their sorrow, I endure;
By their defect my hope is foiled:
The blot they bear is on my name;
Who sins, and I am not to blame?

"And how much of your wrong is mine,
Dark women slaving at the South?
Of your stolen grapes I quaff the wine;
The bread you starve for fills my mouth:
The beam unwinds, but every thread
With blood of strangled souls is red.

"If this be so, we win and wear
A Nessus-robe of poisoned cloth;
Or weave them shrouds they may not wear,—
Fathers and brothers falling both

On ghastly, death-sown fields, that lie
Beneath the tearless Southern sky.

"Alas! the weft has lost its white.
It grows a hideous tapestry,
That pictures war's abhorrent sight:
Unroll not, web of destiny!
Be the dark volume left unread,
The tale untold, the curse unsaid!"

So up and down before her loom
She paces on, and to and fro,
Till sunset fills the dusty room,
And makes the water redly glow,
As if the Merrimack's calm flood
Were changed into a stream of blood.

Too soon fulfilled, and all too true
The words she murmured as she wrought:
But, weary weaver, not to you
Alone was war's stern message brought:
"Woman!" it knelled from heart to heart,
"Thy sister's keeper know thou art!"

WAITING FOR NEWS.

JULY 4, 1863.

AT the corner of the lane,
Where we stood this time last year,
Droops and waves the ripening grain;
Sounds the meadow-lark's refrain,
Just as sad and clear.

Cornel-trees let blossoms fall
In a white shower at my feet;
Thick viburnums hide the wall;
And behind, the bush-bird's call
Bubbles, summery-sweet,

Now, as then, o'er purple blooms
Veiled by meadow-grasses rare;
Bubbles through the coppice glooms;
Joins the sweeetbrier's late perfumes
Wandering through the air.

All returns; your word, your look,
As we stood where now I stand:
With a dread I could not brook,
Well I knew my faint voice shook,
While you held my hand.

Firm you always were, and then
High resolve had made you strong.
Could I bid you linger, when
Freedom called aloud for men
To requite her wrong?

Southrons threw their gauntlet-lie
In the face of God and Truth.
"Go, for love's sake!" was my cry;
"Were not Truth more dear than I,
Thou wert naught, in sooth!"

And you went. The whole year through,
I have felt war's thunder-quake
Rend me hour by hour anew:
Yet I would not call for you,
Though my heart should break.

Only, standing here to-day,
With the sweetbrier's wandering breath,
And the smell of new-mown hay
In the air, "This life," I say,
"Strikes deep root in death."

Death! while here I pass the hours,
Blood is rising round your feet:
I sit ankle-deep in flowers:
On you, red shot falls in showers,
Through the battle-heat.

What if there I saw you lie,
Where the grasses nod and blow,
With your forehead to the sky,
And your wounds — O God! that I, —
That I bade you go!

Yet, were that to say once more,
"Go," I 'd say, "at any cost!"
Many a heart has bled before:
God His heroes will restore;
No great soul is lost.

And the strife that rages so
Burns out meanness from the land.
Men must fall, and blood must flow,
That our Plants of Honor grow
Unto stature grand.

Ay, to-day it seems to me,
That yon little straggling rose
Fed by War's red springs must be:
All of fair and good I see,
Out of anguish grows.

Vines that shade the cottage-home;
  Laurels for the warrior's wreath;
Lilies of white peace, that bloom
After battle's lurid gloom;
    All are nursed by death.

By our bond, I 'm close to-day
  As your sword is, to your side.
If your breath stops in the fray
Watchers from above will say,
    Two for freedom died.

Still I loiter in the lane:
  If I might but send you, dear,
Sweetbrier scents, the lark's refrain,
They would soothe the battle-pain;
    You would feel me near:

And the fresh thought of these fields
  With new strength would nerve your arm.
Fearlessly his sword he wields,
Whose whole risk is what it shields, —
    Home-love, pure and warm.

And you ventured all! You gave
  Freely, hope and strength and life,
That the Stars and Stripes might wave
Nevermore above a slave:
    Cheerfully your wife

Climbs with you great Freedom's pyre —
  Not as Hindoo widows die!
We to life in Life aspire:
Love's last height is our desire;
    Lo! we tread the sky!

Treading with a joyful scorn
  Selfish joy beneath our feet:
In a nation's hope new-born,
In a free world's radiant morn,
    Breathing bliss complete.

Hark! a jubilee of bells
  Pealing through the sunset light,
Shaking out fresh clover-smells!
Parting day to-morrow tells,
    Victory 's in sight.

Hark, again! the long, shrill blast
  Eager throngs are waiting for.
Is it Death's train, sweeping past?
Homeward, Heart! Pain cannot last. —
    What news from the war?

A LOYAL WOMAN'S NO.

No! is my answer from this cold, bleak ridge,
Down to your valley: you may rest you there:
The gulf is wide, and none can build a bridge
That your gross weight would safely hither bear.

Pity me, if you will. I look at you
With something that is kinder far than scorn,
And think, "Ah, well! I might have grovelled, too;
I might have walked there, fettered and forsworn."

I am of nature weak as others are;
I might have chosen comfortable ways;
Once from these heights I shrank, beheld afar,
In the soft lap of quiet, easy days.

I might, — I will not hide it, — once I might
Have lost, in the warm whirlpools of your voice,
The sense of Evil, the stern cry of Right;
But Truth has steered me free, and I rejoice.

Not with the triumph that looks back to jeer
At the poor herd that call their misery bliss;
But as a mortal speaks when God is near,
I drop you down my answer: it is this:

I am not yours, because you prize in me
What is the lowest in my own esteem:
Only my flowery levels can you see,
Nor of my heaven-smit summits do you dream.

I am not yours, because you love yourself:
Your heart has scarcely room for me beside.
I will not be shut in with name and pelf;
I spurn the shelter of your narrow pride!

Not yours, — because you are not man enough
To grasp your country's measure of a man.
If such as you, when Freedom's ways are rough,
Cannot walk in them, learn that women can!

Not yours, — because, in this the nation's need,
You stoop to bend her losses to your gain,
And do not feel the meanness of your deed:
I touch no palm defiled with such a stain!

Whether man's thought can find too lofty steeps
For woman's scaling, care not I to know;
But when he falters by her side, or creeps,
She must not clog her soul with him to go.

Who weds me, must at least with equal pace
Sometimes move with me at my being's height:
To follow him to his superior place,
His rarer atmosphere, were keen delight.

You lure me to the valley: men should call
Up to the mountains, where the air is clear.
Win me and help me climbing, if at all!
Beyond these peaks great harmonies I hear:—

The morning chant of Liberty and Law!
The dawn pours in, to wash out Slavery's blot;
Fairer than aught the bright sun ever saw,
Rises a Nation without stain or spot!

The men and women mated for that time
Tread not the soothing mosses of the plain;
Their hands are joined in sacrifice sublime;
Their feet firm set in upward paths of pain.

Sleep your thick sleep, and go your drowsy way!
You cannot hear the voices in the air!
Ignoble souls will shrivel in that day;
The brightness of its coming can you bear?

For me, I do not walk these hills alone:
Heroes who poured their blood out for the truth,
Women whose hearts bled, martyrs all unknown,
Here catch the sunrise of immortal youth

On their pale cheeks and consecrated brows:—
It charms me not, your call to rest below.
I press their hands, my lips pronounce their vows:
Take my life's silence for your answer: No!

RE-ENLISTED.

MAY, 1864.

O DID you see him in the street, dressed up in army-blue,
When drums and trumpets into town their storm of music threw—
A louder tune than all the winds could muster in the air,
The Rebel winds, that tried so hard our flag in strips to tear?

You did n't mind him? Oh, you looked beyond him then, perhaps,
To see the mounted officers rigged out with trooper-caps,
And shiny clothes, and sashes, and epaulets and all;
It was n't for such things as these he heard his country call.

She asked for men; and up he spoke, my handsome, hearty Sam,
"I'll die for the dear old Union, if she 'll take me as I am."

And if a better man than he there 's mother that can show,
From Maine to Minnesota, then let the nation know!

You would not pick him from the rest by eagles or by stars,
By straps upon his coat-sleeve, or gold or silver bars;
Nor a corporal's strip of worsted; but there 's something in his face,
And something in his even step, a-marching in his place,

That could n't be improved by all the badges in the land:
A patriot, and a good, strong man; are generals much more grand?
We rest our pride on that big heart wrapped up in army-blue,
The girl he loves, Mehitabel, and I, who love him too.

He 's never shirked a battle yet, though frightful risks he 's run,
Since treason flooded Baltimore, the spring of Sixty-One;
Through blood and storm he 's held out firm, nor fretted once, my Sam,
At swamps of Chickahominy, or fields of Antietam.

Though many a time, he 's told us, when he saw them lying dead,
The boys that came from Newburyport, and Lynn, and Marblehead,
Stretched out upon the trampled turf, and wept on by the sky,
It seemed to him the Commonwealth had drained her life-blood dry.

"But then," he said, "the more 's the need the country has of me:
To live and fight the war all through, what glory it will be!
The Rebel balls don't hit me; and, mother, if they should,
You 'll know I 've fallen in my place, where I have always stood."

He 's taken out his furlough, and short enough it seemed:
I often tell Mehitabel he 'll think he only dreamed
Of walking with her nights so bright you could n't see a star,
And hearing the swift tide come in across the harbor bar.

The Stars that shine above the Stripes, they light him southward now;
The tide of war has swept him back; he 's made a solemn vow
To build himself no home-nest till his country's work is done;
God bless the vow, and speed the work, my patriot, my son!

And yet it is a pretty place where his new house might be;
An orchard-road that leads your eye straight out upon the sea.
The boy not work his father's farm? it seems almost a shame;
But any selfish plan for him he 'd never let me name.

He 's re-enlisted for the war, for victory or for death!
A soldier's grave, perhaps! — the thought has half-way stopped my breath,
And driven a cloud across the sun; — my boy, it will not be!
The war will soon be over; home again you 'll come to me!

He 's re-enlisted: and I smiled to see him going, too!
There 's nothing that becomes him half so well as army-blue.

Only a private in the ranks! but sure I am indeed,
If all the privates were like him, they'd scarcely captains need.

And I and Massachusetts share the honor of his birth:
The grand old State! to me the best in all the peopled earth!
I cannot hold a musket, but I have a son who can;
And I 'm proud for Freedom's sake to be the mother of a man!

CANTICLE DE PROFUNDIS.

GLORY to Thee, Father of all the Immortal,
Ever belongs:
We bring Thee from our watch by the grave's portal
Nothing but songs.
Though every wave of trouble has gone o'er us,—
Though in the fire
We have lost treasures time cannot restore us,—
Though all desire
That made life beautiful fades out in sorrow,—
Though the strange path
Winding so lonely through the bleak to-morrow,
No comfort hath,—
Though blackness gathers round us on all faces,
And we can see
By the red war-flash but Love's empty places,—
Glory to Thee!

For, underneath the crash and roar of battle,
The deafening roll
That calls men off to butchery like cattle,
Soul after soul;
Under the horrid sound of chaos seething
In blind, hot strife,
We feel the moving of Thy Spirit, breathing
A better life
Into the air of our long-sickened nation;
A muffled hymn;
The star-sung prelude of a new creation;
Suffusions dim,—
The bursting upward of a stifled glory,
That shall arise
To light new pages in the world's great story
For happier eyes.

If upon lips too close to dead lips leaning,
Songs be not found,
Yet wilt Thou know our life's unuttered meaning:
In its deep ground,

As seeds in earth, sleep sorrow-drenchèd praises,
Waiting to bring
Incense to Thee along thought's barren mazes
When Thou send'st spring.

Glory to Thee! we say, with shuddering wonder,
While a hushed land
Hears the stern lesson syllabled in thunder,
That Truth is grand
As life must be; that neither man nor nation
May soil thy throne
With a soul's life-blood — horrible oblation!
Nor quick be shown
That thou wilt not be mocked by prayer whose nurses
Were Hate and Wrong;
That trees so vile must drop back fruit in curses
Bitter and strong.

Glory to Thee, who wilt not let us smother
Ourselves in sin;
Sending Pain's messengers fast on each other
Us thence to win!
Praise for the scourging under which we languish,
So torn, so sore!
And save us strength, if yet uncleansed by anguish,
To welcome more.
Life were not life to us, could they be fables, —
Justice and Right:
Scathe crime with lightning, till we see the tables
Of Law burn bright!

Glory to Thee, whose glory and whose pleasure
Must be in good!
By Thee the mysteries we cannot measure
Are understood.
With the abysses of Thyself above us,
Our sins below,
That Thou dost look from Thy pure heaven and love us,
Enough to know.
Enough to lay our praises on Thy bosom —
Praises fresh-grown
Out of our depths, dark root and open blossom,
Up to thy throne.
When choking tears make our Hosannas falter,
The music free!
Oh, keep clear voices singing at Thy altar,
Glory to Thee!

LINCOLN'S PASSING-BELL.

APRIL 15, 1865.

TOLLING, tolling, tolling!
All the bells of the land!
Lo! the patriot martyr
Taketh his journey grand;
Travels into the ages,
Bearing a hope how dear!
Into life's unknown vistas,
Liberty's great pioneer.

Tolling, tolling, tolling!
Do the budded violets know
The pain of the lingering clangor
Shaking their bloom out so?
They open into strange sorrow,
The rain of a nation's tears;
Into the saddest April
Twined with the New World's years.

Tolling, tolling, tolling!
See, they come as a cloud,—
Hearts of a mighty people,
Bearing his pall and shroud!
Lifting up, like a banner,
Signals of loss and woe!
Wonder of breathless nations,
Moveth the solemn show.

Tolling, tolling, tolling!
Was it, O man beloved,—
Was it thy funeral only,
Over the land that moved?
Veiled by that hour of anguish,
Borne with the rebel rout,
Forth into utter darkness,
Slavery's corse went out.

THE FLAG.

JUNE 17, 1865.

LET it idly droop, or sway
To the wind's light will;
Furl its stars, or float in day;
Flutter, or be still!

It has held its colors bright,
  Through the war-smoke dun;
Spotless emblem of the Right,
  Whence success was won.

Let it droop in graceful rest
  For a passing hour—
Glory's banner, last and best;
  Freedom's freshest flower!
Each red stripe has blazoned forth
  Gospels writ in blood;
Every star has sung the birth
  Of some deathless good.

Let it droop, but not too long!
  On the eager wind
Bid it wave, to shame the wrong;
  To inspire mankind
With a larger human love;
  With a truth as true
As the heaven that broods above
  Its deep field of blue.

In the gathering hosts of hope,
  In the march of man,
Open for it place and scope,
  Bid it lead the van;
Till beneath the searching skies
  Martyr-blood be found,
Purer than our sacrifice,
  Crying from the ground:

Till a flag with some new light
  Out of Freedom's sky,
Kindles, through the gulfs of night,
  Holier blazonry.
Let its glow the darkness drown!
  Give our banner sway,
Till its joyful stars go down,
  In undreamed-of day!

VERSES FOR OCCASIONS.

OUR ALUMNI.

FOR A MEETING OF THE MONTICELLO SEMINARY ASSOCIATION, ILLINOIS.

Two worlds I live in, East and West:
I cannot tell which world is best;
The friends that people both are dear;
The same glad sun
Shines into each; far-off is near,
And then is now, and there is here;
Both worlds are one.

What have the years to do with youth?
Present and Past unite, in sooth;
Morning and noon in day have met:
Time but unfurls
Life's wings; can we our own forget?
I have not lost my girlhood yet,
Dear Western girls!

With you a stately home I share,
Into whose windows the soft air
Comes singing from the wilderness,
Of mighty streams,
Great forests in primeval dress,
And sea-like prairies — a vague guess
Of scents and gleams.

The whippoorwills are crowding near;
The katydids have paused, to hear
What girls inlocked with girls can say,
Who slowly pace
At dusk the long, tree-cloistered way,
While twilight's flickering touches play
From face to face.

At school-girl-friendship let them smile
Who never felt its charm beguile

The mystery of the untried years;
The thoughts that grow
To Atlas-weight of nameless fears;
The awed foreseeing that endears
Its sharers so!

How large our world around us spread!
How deep our skies grew overhead!
How close our hearts together drew!
Your golden curls,
Your eyes of hazel and of blue,
I see; I live again with you,
Dear Western girls!

What did we talk of? Everything
That wise men write, or poets sing:
Among the gods we roamed at will:
The Olympian height, —
The solemn boughs of Ygdrasil, —
Epic and rune, — we felt their thrill
With strange delight.

Victories by Greek or Trojan won;
The wanderings of Anchises' son;
Pericles, Cæsar, Charlemagne;
The Viking bold;
The Saxon's contest with the Dane;
Knights and Crusades: the Norman's reign;
The Cloth of Gold:

All became real to our thought:
Heroes appeared, and fields were fought
Upon green levels where we gazed,
Nor scarcely knew
If there Admetus' cattle grazed,
Or there the flags of tourney blazed
And trumpets blew.

And sage and minstrel, gathering round,
Made the wild prairies classic ground:
Blind Homer, Plato, Socrates,
And Sappho came;
Dante's deep murmur on the breeze
Met Milton's mighty symphonies:
The scholar's name

Sounded from girlish lip to lip,
In every-day companionship:
Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant;
The mystic word
That mediæval doctors chant,
The scope great Christian thinkers grant,
Our spirits stirred.

And gladly always we returned
To lessons in our childhood learned,
Of one Heart that enfolds us all,
To whom we send
Our longings in one human call,
Before whose feet all ages fall —
Father and Friend!

Dear friends, dear girls, at school we are,
Now even as then: the farthest star
Whereon hereafter we may meet
To win new lore,
Though radiant with fresh mystery sweet,
Will have some wisdom to repeat,
We learned before;

Learned at our Alma Mater's side:
We cherish with a mutual pride,
Our Monticello's starry name —
Our Mount of Heaven,
Where to look forth on life we came;
Where pure ambitions, noble shame,
To us were given.

And with young hearts that gather there,
Eager to breathe the awakening air
That sweetened all our springtide way,
We sing again,
As happy friends and sisters may;
Our yesterday and their to-day
One joy remain.

For sheltering care that once we knew;
For faithful guides that led us through
The widening path, the opening door,
Your thanks and mine
Rise gratefully, as oft before:
We gladly lay one offering more
Upon that shrine.

I bind my East up with my West,
Nor ask which time or place is best:
In memory's amaranthine sheaf,
Old faiths among,
I twine the buds of new belief, —
Old loves with friendship's opening leaf, —
All fresh and young.

I fuse my Present with my Past,
And last is first, and first is last:
The winds that sang across the sea
In childhood's dawn

Have met the Western breezes free,
And in one lift of harmony
They bear me on.

Dear girls, remembered or unknown,
Across your life and mine has blown
The same wild scent of prairie-flowers;
And while Time's pearls
Shower at our feet, I thank the powers
That made our youth forever ours —
Dear Western girls!

AT NORTON AGAIN.

FOR A REUNION AT WHEATON SEMINARY, NORTON, MASS.

We heard your friendly summoning, we heard your call, "Come back!"
And memory rose and hastened down the old familiar track
Among the Norton meadows, where the violets shone through dew,
And the tears of autumn lay like pearls upon the gentian's blue.

We heard the orioles singing in the elm trees' shadowy height,
And the carol of the robin pierced the golden morning light;
And voices sweeter than the birds', and eyes of heavenlier blue
Than the gentian's, or the violet's, around us softly drew.

Oh, we were happier than we guessed; dearer than tongue or pen
Can paint it, was the love that flowed around our pathway then;
A spring unsullied, welling out of girlhood's trustful heart,
That held a teacher's blessing as the love of God a part!

A flitting footstep in the hall — a low rap at the door —
A white brow leans, a dark eye droops, against our knee once more;
And gentle fancies, such as hide in hearts of dreaming girls,
Float up in music from shy lips beneath a veil of curls.

We pace the cool verandah, with the hand of one in ours
Whose heart unfolds with holy hopes, pure as the breath of flowers
In twilight and in dewfall; the sanctity of truth
Blooms lovelier through the whiteness of a maiden's unsoiled youth.

We look again: — they are not here; young countenances strange
Smile on us from their places: the bewildering touch of change
Has fallen on every one of us; and those familiar feet, —
On through what unknown avenues move they in passage fleet?

Under what trees of Eden do our beloved walk?
What angels bear them company in high and friendly talk?
What wisdom of the immortals do those souls illumed explore,
That need the counsel and the help of our weak hearts no more?

Oh, friends, dear eyes you see not shine upon us everywhere;
Faces beam downward, beckoning from balustrade and stair
Behind these other faces, as beautiful to-day
With youth and hope and girlhood's dreams as those long passed away.

These corridors are echoing with many a well-known name:
Our "Alice"—"Mary"—"Sarah"—alas! are not the same
That answer to the summons now; once through the open door
They heard a call, they answered it, and they return no more.

It is in vain; we never can come back to anything;
All joy, all loveliness of earth, is caught upon the wing.
Flown on into the unseen heavens, our birds of Paradise
Sing of the eternal summits to which we must arise.

The pleasant woods remain, the birds, the meadows, and the flowers;
They only lack the sweetness of those well-remembered hours.
From the deep heavens they throb toward us, the hearts for whom we yearn;
And we at last shall go to them who never can return.

It may be that they pause to-day upon the golden floor;
It may be that they hither gaze through some celestial door
Along the heavenly stairway, to meet our longing love,
And whisper of reunion sweet in light and life above.

In God's great school of destiny, there is no going back;
They are become our teachers now; down from the shining track
They reach, to lead us up to heights of wisdom they have won:—
We take their hands; we climb the stair; and with them we go on.

HYMN.

WRITTEN FOR THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH, BEVERLY, MASS.

THE sea sang sweetly to the shore
Two hundred years ago:
To weary pilgrim-ears it bore
A welcome, deep and low.

They gathered, in the autumnal calm,
To their first house of prayer;
And softly rose their Sabbath psalm
On the wild woodland air.

The ocean took the echo up;
It rang from tree to tree:
And praise, as from an incense-cup,
Poured over earth and sea.

They linger yet upon the breeze,
  The hymns our fathers sung:
They rustle in the roadside trees,
  And give each leaf a tongue.

The grand old sea is moaning yet
  With music's mighty pain:
No chorus has arisen, to fit
  Its wondrous anthem-strain.

When human hearts are tuned to Thine,
  Whose voice is in the sea,
Life's murmuring waves a song divine
  Shall chant, O God, to Thee!

HYMN.

FOR THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AT THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LOWELL, MASS.

HERE, as we came in youth's fresh days,
We come, O God, with fervent praise,
To thank Thee for that summer hour
When here Thy church burst into flower.

The hymns our happy childhood sung
Are lingering yet on every tongue;
And memory's harp of thousand strings
New sweetness to their echo brings.

Familiar voices haunt the air:
The lips that bore aloft our prayer
Repeat again the heavenward call;
Their benedictions on us fall.

O God, these lives of ours are blest
Through friends passed on into their rest!
We seek with them Thy homeward way;
We sing one song with them to-day.

The song the morning-stars awoke
When first Thy light through darkness broke
Shall our unending chorus be, —
The song of souls made one in Thee!

HYMN.

SUNG AT THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH, WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

THANKS to Thee, O God most high,
For the men, the days gone by!
Thanks for all the fathers wrought;
For their patient toil of thought;
For their faith, which lit the land
With a glory clear and grand;
For the victories that they won
Through the gospel of Thy Son.

Standing where they stood, we turn
Unto Thee, our way to learn.
Let our inward purpose be,
Not to follow them, but Thee!
Heirs of many a harvest field
From their cloudy dawn concealed,
Toiling after them, we share
Thankfully their hope and prayer.

But the conquests of the Past
Pale before the Future vast:
Brightening on the eastern sky,
Lo, Thy coming draweth nigh!
Deep as inmost thought can sound,
Wide as farthest being's bound,
Earth and heaven Thy praise shall swell,
Present God — Immanuel!

Builded not by mortal hands,
Evermore Thy temple stands:
Rising glorious from the clod,
Man Thy temple is, O God!
Through him let Thy Spirit flow
Till our world no night shall know,
And the heights and depths shall ring
With the name of Christ, our King!

GARFIELD'S BURIAL-DAY.

WE mourn with you, dear country, our leader and our friend;
We join the long procession, we mourn as we ascend! . . .
And heartbeats tolled through silence — a muffled funeral sound —
As up the shadowy hillside that solemn day we wound.

We left warm earth behind us, the valley and the vine;
We passed through spectral forests, dim ghosts of fir and pine;
Out of gray desolation that chilled the blood like death,
We entered clearer azure, we breathed a purer breath.

The great New England mountains, the tallest of their clan,
Stood purple-robed around us; the presence of a man —
The man we mourned — loomed vaster than any loftiest peak
Uprising from the lowlands unclouded light to seek.

Yet see, where far above us, a life escaped its shroud,
Yon pale, scarred summit rises out of a sunset-cloud
Woven of snow and crimson! and proudly, lightly now
The new moon hangs her crescent on that transfigured brow!

Our martyr, crowned with honor, we saw uplifted stand,
His monument his manhood, the glory of the land.
Are not great men as mountains, that in themselves aspire
From their own baser levels toward heaven's baptismal fire?

"Men should be more than mountains in grandeur — and they are!"
We said, as gazing downward around us, near and far,
We saw a world of summits touched with that sunset flame,
And greeted, high among them, the peak that bears his name.

. . . . . .

Night, beautiful with visions, folded the hills around;
We slept and woke. What splendor streams through the blue profound?
What hero spirit beckons from unknown heights afar,
More glorious than Orion, bright as the morning star?

We cried, "Look up, dear country! ah, lift thee, widowed brow!
As he has borne the earthly, he wears the heavenly now!
The cruel blow that pierced him has raised him to the sky;
Behold the starry manhood that lives, and cannot die!"

Ascending MOUNT WASHINGTON, N. H., September 26, 1881.

TWO FESTIVALS.

WRITTEN FOR THE BOSTON TRAVELLER, CHRISTMAS, 1881.

THANKSGIVING stirs her ruddy fire;
The glow illuminates November:
She sees new glimmerings of desire
Flash up from every fading ember.
The corn is stored, and heaped the board;
The matron Day, her comforts summing,
Hears, through her best, a better word, —
The merry shout of "Christmas coming!"

The fires of two home-festivals
Light up the frosty air together;
Thanksgiving unto Christmas calls,
"Shake hands across this keen cold weather!
We both are here to bring good cheer;
Each has a heart-glow for the other;
The chill of our New England year
Welcomes your warmth, my Old-World brother.

"Upon your jovial countenance,
Your overflow of human gladness,
My Puritans once looked askance;
They saw in merriment but madness.
That gloom has ceased; our annual feast
Rebukes no laughing guest as sinning;
From you, bright Birthday of the East,
The date of its own joy beginning.

"My Pilgrims thought your wassail rude,
Your Yule-flames a barbaric splendor;
Your gay old English games eschewed,
Their graver gratitude to render
For hardships past, for peace at last:
Now, with a larger comprehending,
We catch your cheerful meaning vast,
That gives the year a blessed ending.

"You raised the clash of Pagan mirth
To chords of purer, loftier feeling:
How joyously the desert earth
Rang to the Christmas bells' first pealing!
Blithe bells, repeat your echo sweet,
Of Him who died, and yet is living!
Ring on! ring in His coming feet,
Whose presence is the World's Thanksgiving!"

Ah, sacred Christmas! with your snows
Falls on the land a blessing whiter!
Its best, its Holiest, Heaven bestows:
Light breaks; life everywhere grows brighter.
Our hearts we lift to take God's gift;
Our own, to share with one another:
Apart no more we coldly drift;
Christmas brings brother home to brother.

Dear last days of the dying year,
Golden with Love's most lovely story!
Dear homely earth, to Heaven so near,
Shone on by Bethlehem's starry glory!
Glad Christmas-tide, flow swift and wide,
With precious gifts for mortals freighted!
Glad Christmas Day, with us abide,
At every hearthstone acclimated!

So Christmas and Thanksgiving clasp
  Their hands, and brightly bridge December.
Close met within that heart-felt grasp,
  All friends One Friend of all remember.
Two feast-fires glow across the snow:
  Dead voices answer to the living,
As home to meet our own we go;
  "Praise God for Christmas and Thanksgiving!"

CHILDHOOD SONGS.

TO PRINCE HAL AND LITTLE QUEEN MAUDE.

I bring you these little song-blossoms;
They grew in my working-field:
No wonderful beauty or splendor
Can a trodden footpath yield:

But the breezes of childish laughter,
And the light in a baby's eye,
To the homeliest road bring a freshness
As free as the blue of the sky.

And I, for one, would much rather,
Could I merit so sweet a thing,
Be the poet of little children
Than the laureate of a king.

IN TIME'S SWING.

FATHER TIME, your footsteps go
Lightly as the falling snow.
In your swing I 'm sitting, see!
Push me softly; one, two, three,
Twelve times only. Like a sheet
Spreads the snow beneath my feet:
Singing merrily, let me swing
Out of winter into spring!

Swing me out, and swing me in!
Trees are bare, but birds begin
Twittering to the peeping leaves
On the bough beneath the eaves.
Look! one lilac-bud I saw!
Icy hillsides feel the thaw:
April chased off March to-day;
Now I catch a glimpse of May.

Oh, the smell of sprouting grass!
In a blur the violets pass:
Whispering from the wild-wood come
Mayflowers' breath, and insects' hum.

Roses carpeting the ground;
Orioles warbling all around:
Swing me low, and swing me high,
To the warm clouds of July!

Slower now, for at my side
White pond-lilies open wide:
Underneath the pine's tall spire
Cardinal-blossoms burn like fire.
They are gone; the golden-rod
Flashes from the dark green sod.
Crickets in the grass I hear;
Asters light the fading year.

Slower still! October weaves
Rainbows of the forest-leaves.
Gentians fringed, like eyes of blue,
Glimmer out of sleety dew.
Winds through withered sedges hiss:
Meadow-green I sadly miss.
Oh, 'tis snowing; swing me fast,
While December shivers past!

Frosty-bearded Father Time,
Stop your footfall on the rime!
Hard your push, your hand is rough;
You have swung me long enough.
"Nay, no stopping," say you? Well,
Some of your best stories tell,
While you swing me — gently, do! —
From the Old Year to the New.

PRINCE HAL.

Prince Hal is a widow's baby;
His father he never knew.
In the waning of summer he opened
His eyes of the ocean's blue:

And his mother with tender trouble
Gazed into their azure deep,
Whence the cloud of some unknown sorrow
Seemed, vague as a mist, to creep.

It broke on her heart in winter, —
A knell from the torrid isles
Where a death-sleep fell on her husband:
But the babe wore his father's smiles;

And all who beheld him loved him —
Prince Hal, with the eyes of blue

Under the spirit-like forehead; —
  Pale blossom of light and dew.

What recks Prince Hal of the season,
  Enthroned on his mother's arm?
Thick snow through the air is falling,
  But baby and bud are warm.

For buds are the nurslings of tempests,
  And grief may cradle a joy.
On the widow's heart lies a sorrow
  Whose age is the age of her boy.

But he, in the snow-wreath's glimmer,
  Sees nothing but bloom and mirth.
To the royal soul of a baby
  One fairy realm is the earth.

Prince Hal, he is like his father,
  As a prince resembles a king;
In the crown of a manly nature,
  That is nobler than anything.

For an empty crown is a bauble;
  And he is a sovereign alone
Who lives to bring joy unto others,
  And to make their trouble his own.

Prince Hal is the son of a widow;
  His father went sailing away
To inherit a far-off kingdom:
  The boy will follow, some day.

Though his mother her lifelong sorrow
  Measures out by his childish years,
Their length is the span of a rainbow
  That bridges a gulf of tears.

He has cheered us all, as a sunbeam
  Strikes into the heart of a storm:
Through the gladness of little children
  Are the frostiest lives kept warm.

Prince Hal, they alone are true princes
  Who make this old world bloom anew
With the grace and the glory of manhood:
  Great things are expected of you!

AT QUEEN MAUDE'S BANQUET.

SHE wears no crown
  Save her own flossy curls,
Rosiest, plumpest,
  Of pet baby-girls;
Blue-eyed and dimpled
  And dignified she,
Pouring out for us
  Invisible tea;
    Little Queen Maude.

Tiniest teacup
  And saucer and spoon:
Baby, your banquet
  Has ended too soon.
Fancy's full cupboard
  Unlocks to your hand;
We, your true subjects,
  Await your command,
    Little Queen Maude.

Throned on the floor,
  We must stoop to your state:
If a queen 's little,
  Can courtiers be great?
Now kiss us, dismiss us,
  Red lips rosy-sweet,
For yonder 's a poet
  Chained fast to your feet,
    Little Queen Maude.

PEEPSY.

GIRL-PEEPSY to the baby sang
  A drowsy little tune;
But all the while the baby lay
  And whimpered for the moon.

"Dear little baby!" Peepsy said,
  "Don't reach your arms out so!
But shut your eyes, and right away
  To fetch the moon I 'll go."

"Now breaking promises is bad, —
  As bad as telling lies,"
Said Peepsy, for the babe in sleep
  That instant closed his eyes.

"And I must go and fetch the moon
Before my brother wakes:
He shall not say that Peepsy-girl
Her promise ever breaks.

"And there the moon hangs on the hill,
Our cottage door close by.
I must run fast, or it will slip
Out into the deep sky."

The crickets chirped, "Quick! Peepsy! — quick!"
"Quick! quick!" the katydid
Called from the elm-tree by the gate:
Down from her chair she slid.

She could not reach her broad-brimmed hat;
Upon the peg it hung.
She shut the cottage door; the gate
Behind her softly swung.

The rippling brook laughed up at her,
With all its twinkling eyes;
But rustling leaves to forest-birds
Were whispering lullabies;

And trees and rocks were fast asleep,
Folded in shadows black,
As little Peepsy trudged along
The ferny mountain-track.

The whippoorwills went gossiping
From silent tree to tree,
Among the gray eavesdropping bats;
So strange it was to see

A little girl at nightfall climb
The steep and lonesome hill!
But bravely Peepsy hastened on,
Beneath the starlight still.

A wind came rushing down the rocks,
And sighed, "Where, Peepsy, where?"
"After the moon!" The light wind laughed,
And lifted Peepsy's hair,

And kissed her forehead, and went on.
An owl called, "Who, child, who?"
"My name is Peepsy, if you please!
May I just pass by you?

"I 'm only going to get the moon,
You 're willing, Mr. Owl?"

Poor Peepsy trembled; — such a laugh!
It sounded like a howl.

And all the forest rang, "Hoo — hoo!
The like was never heard!"
Ten owls flew down and stared at her;
But she said not a word.

For now the moon seemed close at hand;
But oh! she almost cried:
It was too large for her to lift
Down to the baby's side.

If she could only reach its edge,
So even and so round,
And send it trundling like a hoop
Along the mossy ground!

Alas! it was too far! too far!
Though she on tiptoe stood.
"Oh, pretty stars!" she called aloud,
"Will you be very good,

"And give the moon a push this way?"
The silly stars, they wink,
But will not budge. She sits her down
Upon a rock to think;

And wonder why boys ask for things
Girls cannot get for them: —
But look! the Lady Moon lifts off
Her crescent-diadem,

And slips the happy Peepsy in!
See! like a silver sledge
It dashes down the gloomy hill,
Past glen and gorge and ledge!

It glides along the garden walk,
It stops beside the door!
Has katydid or cricket seen
Wonders like this before?

"Keep it!" the Moon said, "I have more;
Twelve new ones every year.
Ride in it with him every night,
The baby-brother dear!

"But tell him not to cry for me,
Since I must walk my round
Through my great nursery of stars:
So let his sleep be sound!

"And I will kiss him every night
As I am passing by:
And you two, in your silver sledge,
May chase me through the sky."

Girl-Peepsy rubbed her dazzled eyes;
"I thank you, Lady Moon!
I think the baby's not awake,
I have come back so soon."

She rubbed her eyes: the baby slept. —
A strange thing does it seem
That Peepsy went and brought the moon?
She did it in a dream.

IN THE TREE-TOP.

"ROCK-A-BY, baby, up in the tree-top!"
Mother his blanket is spinning;
And a light little rustle that never will stop,
Breezes and boughs are beginning.
Rock-a-by, baby, swinging so high!
Rock-a-by!

"When the wind blows, then the cradle will rock."
Hush! now it stirs in the bushes;
Now with a whisper, a flutter of talk,
Baby and hammock it pushes.
Rock-a-by, baby! shut, pretty eye!
Rock-a-by!

"Rock with the boughs, rock-a-by, baby, dear!"
Leaf-tongues are singing and saying;
Mother she listens, and sister is near,
Under the tree softly playing.
Rock-a-by, baby! mother's close by!
Rock-a-by!

Weave him a beautiful dream, little breeze!
Little leaves, nestle around him!
He will remember the song of the trees,
When age with silver has crowned him.
Rock-a-by, baby! wake by and by!
Rock-a-by!

WHAT SHALL WE WRAP THE BABY IN?

WHAT shall we wrap the baby in?
Silks are too coarse, and velvets too rough,
Snowiest linens not half white enough:
A web for his blanket what fairy can spin?
What shall we wrap the baby in?

The softest of colors may cover his bed,
Delicate hues of the sky and the rose,
Tints of all buds that in May-morns unclose,
When on the bosom of Sleep drops his head: —
Wrap him in something more heavenly, instead!

What shall we wrap the baby in?
Nothing that fingers have woven will do:
Looms of the heart weave love ever anew:
Love, only love, is the right thread to spin,
Love we must wrap the baby in!

MOONSHINE.

MY little pet sat in the moonshine,
A square of light on the floor,
Shaped by the open window;
And its halo dim he wore.

It turned his hair to spun silver,
His robe into folds of pearl;
Yet it was but a linen nightgown,
A tangle of flaxen curl.

He was there at play, white nestling!
A moment before he slept;
And he patted and kissed the moonbeams,
And, cooing, across them crept.

"Bring us the moonshine, baby!"
Quick sprang the little feet;
Scooping it up by lapfuls,
Hurried the fingers sweet,

To load us with unseen treasure.
He saw it, bright and plain;
Never doubted the baby
Ours was a real gain.

Firmly we also believed it;
For, after he was asleep,

We had his moonlit picture
  Always our own to keep.

It has not grown old, or faded;
  It will not, it never can.
We shall have it still to look at,
  When he is a bearded man.

If then he should win great riches,
  He cannot bestow a gift
So rare as the one he brought us
  Out of the moonbeams' drift.

May he never lose faith in moonshine!
  The ore that glimmers and streams
From the mountain-clefts of beauty,
  In the far-off world of dreams!

Right royally may he scatter
  The wealth of unfathomed skies,
The fine gold and sheeny silver
  From the mines of Paradise!

SNOW-SONG.

I HEAR a bird chirp in the sun;
  He flutters and hops to and fro;
His tiny light tracks, one by one,
  He prints on the new-fallen snow.
    Little bird, sing!
    Sun, give his wing
A flicker of gold as you go!
Make a smooth path for him, Snow!

I see a child out there at play;
  His footfall is light on the snow;
His curls catch a swift golden ray
  Of the sun, while the merry winds blow.
    Little child, run!
    Shine on him, Sun!
Blow him fair weather, Wind, blow!
Make a white path for him, Snow!

The little bird's home is the sky,
  Or the ground, or a nest in the tree.
The little child some day will fly
  From his doorstep, new regions to see.
    Bird-like and free
    May his sunny flight be!
And wherever on earth he may go,
May his footsteps be whiter than snow!

THE WIND-FLOWER.

WIND-FLOWER, Wind-Flower, why are you here?
This is a boisterous time of the year
For blossoms as fragile and tender as you
To be out on the roadsides, in spring-raiment new!
The snow-flakes yet flutter abroad in the air,
And the sleet and the tempest are weary to bear.
Have you not come here, pale darling, too soon?
You would seem more at home with the blossoms of June.

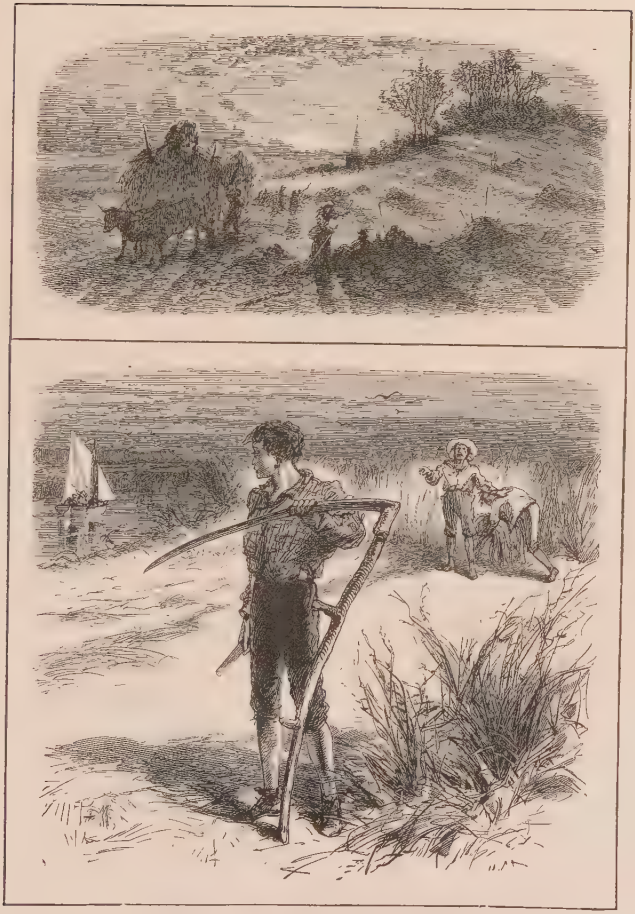
"Why have I come here?" the Wind-Flower said;
"Why?" and she gracefully nodded her head
As a breeze touched her petals; "Perhaps to show you
That the strong may be sometimes the delicate, too.
I am fed and refreshed by these cold, rushing rains;
The first melting snow-drifts brought life to my veins;
The storm rocked my cradle with lullabies wild:
I am here with the Wind, — because I am his child!"

MARCH.

MARCH! March! March! They are coming
In troops to the tune of the wind:
Red-headed woodpeckers drumming,
Gold-crested thrushes behind;
Sparrows in brown jackets hopping
Past every gateway and door;
Finches with crimson caps stopping
Just where they stopped years before.

March! March! March! They are slipping
Into their places at last:
Little white lily-buds, dripping
Under the showers that fall fast;
Buttercups, violets, roses;
Snowdrop and bluebell and pink;
Throng upon throng of sweet posies,
Bending the dewdrops to drink.

March! March! March! They will hurry
Forth at the wild bugle-sound;
Blossoms and birds in a flurry,
Fluttering all over the ground.
Hang out your flags, birch and willow!
Shake out your red tassels, larch!
Up, blades of grass, from your pillow!
Hear who is calling you — March!



"There 's a giant with a scythe." Page 125.

RED-TOP AND TIMOTHY.

Red-Top and Timothy
  Come here in the spring;
Light spears out of emerald sheaths
  Everywhere they swing:
Harmless little soldiers,
  On the field they play,
Nodding plumes and crossing blades
  All the livelong day.

Timothy and Red-Top
  Bring their music-band:
Some with scarlet epaulets,
  Strutting stiff and grand;
Some in sky-blue jackets,
  Some in vests of pink:
Black and white their leader's coat, —
  Restless Bob-o'-link!

Red-Top's airy feathers
  Tremble to his notes,
In themselves an orchestra;
  Then a thousand throats
Set the winds a-laughing,
  While the saucy thing
Anywhere, on spike or spear,
  Sways himself to sing.

Red-Top and Timothy
  Have a mortal foe;
There 's a giant with a scythe
  Comes and lays them low;
Shuts them in barn-prisons;
  Spares not even Sweet Clover:
Bob-o'-link leads off his band,
  Now the campaign 's over.

Timothy and Red-Top
  Will return again,
With familiar songs and flowers,
  Through the April rain.
Though their giant foeman
  Will not let them be,
One who swings a keener scythe
  Cuts down such as he.

JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT.

CRACKLE! crack! the ice is melting;
From the west the rain falls pelting:
Swish and gurgle, splash and spatter!
"Halloo! good folks, what 's the matter?
Seems to me the roof is leaking!"—
Jack from down below is speaking.

You know little Jack? In the spring he is seen on the swampy edge
Of the hemlock-wood, looking out from the shade of the fern-wreathed ledge:
But in winter he cuddles close under a thatch of damp leaves.—
Now the water is trickling fast in through his garret-eaves;
And he opens his eyes, and up he starts, out of his cosy bed,
And he carefully holds, while he climbs aloft, his umbrella over his head.
High time for you to be up, Jack, when every growing thing
Is washing and sunning itself, Jack, and getting ready for spring!

Little Jack, the country preacher,
Thinks, "These rustics need a teacher:
I shall scold the wild young flowers
For coquetting with the showers
That invade my honest dwelling:
What I 'll tell them — there 's no telling."

They call him Jack-in-the-Pulpit, he stands up so stiff and so queer
On the edge of the swamp, and waits for the flower-folk to come and hear
The text and the sermon, and all the grave things that he has to say;
But the blossoms they laugh and they dance, — they are wilder than ever, to-day;
And as nobody stops to listen, so never a word has he said;
But there in his pulpit he stands, and holds his umbrella over his head.
And we have not a doubt in our minds, Jack, you are wisely listening
To the organ-chant of the winds, Jack, and the tunes that the sweet birds sing!

SIR ROBIN.

ROLLICKING Robin is here again.
What does he care for the April rain?
Care for it? Glad of it. Does n't he know
That the April rain carries off the snow,
And coaxes out leaves to shadow his nest,
And washes his pretty red Easter vest,

And makes the juice of the cherry sweet,
For his hungry little robins to eat?
"Ha! ha! ha!" hear the jolly bird laugh.
"That is n't the best of the story, by half!"

Gentleman Robin, he walks up and down,
Dressed in orange-tawny and black and brown.
Though his eye is so proud and his step so firm,
He can always stoop to pick up a worm.
With a twist of his head, and a strut and a hop,
To his Robin-wife, in the peach-tree top,
Chirping her heart out, he calls: "My dear,
You don't earn your living! Come here! Come here!
Ha! ha! ha! Life is lovely and sweet;
But what would it be if we 'd nothing to eat?"

Robin, Sir Robin, gay, red-vested knight,
Now you have come to us, summer 's in sight.
You never dream of the wonders you bring,—
Visions that follow the flash of your wing;
How all the beautiful By-and-by
Around you and after you seems to fly!
Sing on, or eat on, as pleases your mind!
Well have you earned every morsel you find.
"Aye! Ha! ha! ha!" whistles Robin. "My dear,
Let us all take our own choice of good cheer!"

GOWNS OF GOSSAMER.

THEY 'RE hastening up across the fields; I see them on their way!
They will not wait for cloudless skies, nor even a pleasant day;
For Mother Earth will weave and spread a carpet for their feet;
Already voices in the air announce their coming sweet.

One sturdy little violet peeped out alone, in March,
While cobwebs of the snow yet hung about the sky's gray arch;
But merry winds to sweep them down in earnest had begun:
The violet, though she shook with cold, stayed on to watch the fun.

And now the other violets are crowding up to see
What welcome in this blustering world may chance for them to be:
They lift themselves on slender stems in every shaded place,
Heads over heads, all turned one way, wonder in every face.

There shiver, in rose-tinted white, the pale anemones;
There pink, perfumed arbutus trails from underneath bare trees;
Hepatica shows opal gleams beneath her silk-lined cloak,
Then slips it off, and hides amid the gnarled roots of the oak.

They like the clear, cool weather well, when they are fairly out,
And they are happy as the flowers of sunnier climes, no doubt.
When little star-shaped innocence makes every field snow-white
With her four-cornered neckerchiefs, there is no lovelier sight.

And when the wild geranium comes, in gauzy purple sheen,
Forerunner of the woodland rose, June's darling, Summer's queen,
With small herb-robert like a page close following her feet,
Jack-in-the-pulpit will stand up in his green-curtained seat:

Marsh-marigold and adder's-tongue will wade the brook across,
Where cornel-flowers are grouped, in crowds, on strips of turf and moss,
And wood-stars white, from lucent green will glimmer and unfold,
And scarlet columbines will lift their trumpets, mouthed with gold.

Then will the birds sing anthems; for the earth and sky and air
Will seem a great cathedral, filled with beings dear and fair;
And long processions, from the time that bluebird-notes begin
Till gentians fade, through forest-aisles will still move out and in.

Unnumbered multitudes of flowers it were in vain to name
Along the roads and in the woods will old acquaintance claim;
And scarcely shall we know which one for beauty we prefer,
Of all the wayside fairies clad in gowns of gossamer.

CALLING THE VIOLET.

Dear little Violet,
  Don't be afraid!
Lift your blue eyes
  From the rock's mossy shade!
All the birds call for you
  Out of the sky:
May is here, waiting,
  And here, too, am I.

Why do you shiver so,
  Violet sweet?
Soft is the meadow-grass
  Under my feet.
Wrapped in your hood of green,
  Violet, why
Peep from your earth-door
  So silent and shy?

Trickle the little brooks
  Close to your bed;
Softest of fleecy clouds
  Float overhead;

"Ready and waiting!"
The slender reeds sigh:
"Ready and waiting!"
We sing, — May and I.

Come, pretty Violet,
Winter's away:
Come, for without you
May is n't May.
Down through the sunshine
Wings flutter and fly; —
Quick, little Violet,
Open your eye!

Hear the rain whisper,
"Dear Violet, come!"
How can you stay
In your underground home?
Up in the pine-boughs
For you the winds sigh:
Homesick to see you,
Are we, — May and I.

Ha! though you care not
For call or for shout,
Yon troop of sunbeams
Are winning you out.
Now all is beautiful
Under the sky:
May's here — and violets!
Winter, good-by!

SHOWER AND FLOWER.

Down the little drops patter,
Making a musical clatter,
Out of the clouds they throng:
Freshness of heaven they scatter
Little dark rootlets among.
"Coming to visit you, Posies!
Open your hearts to us, Roses!"
That is the Raindrops' song.

Up the little seed rises:
Buds of all colors and sizes
Clamber up out of the ground.
Gently the blue sky surprises
The earth with that soft-rushing sound.
"Welcome!" the brown bees are humming:
"Come! for we wait for your coming!"
Whisper the wild-flowers around.

"Shower, it is pleasant to hear you!" —
"Flower, it is sweet to be near you!" —
This is the song everywhere.
Listen! the music will cheer you!
Raindrop and blossom so fair
Gladly are meeting together
Out in the beautiful weather:
Oh, the sweet song in the air!

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEED.

CHILDREN dear, can you read
The mystery of the seed,
The little seed, that will not remain
In earth, but rises in fruit and grain?

A mystery, passing strange,
Is the seed, in its wondrous change;
Forest and flower in its husk concealed,
And the golden wealth of the harvest-field.

Ever, around and above,
Works the Invisible Love:
It lives in the heavens and under the land;
In blossom and sheaf and the reaper's hand.

— Sower, you surely know
That the harvest never will grow,
Except for the Angels of Sun and Rain,
Who water and ripen the springing grain!

Awake for us, heart and eye,
Are watchers behind the sky:
There are unseen reapers in every band,
Who lend their strength to the weary hand.

When the wonderful light breaks through
From above, on the work we do,
We can see how near us our helpers are,
Who carry the sickle and wear the star.

— Sower, you surely know
That good seed never will grow,
Except for the Angels of Joy and Pain,
Who scatter the sunbeams and pour the rain!

— Child, with the sower sing!
Love is in everything!
The secret is deeper than we can read:
But we gather the grain if we sow the seed.

EASTER DAWN.

BREAKS the joyful Easter dawn,
Clearer yet, and stronger;
Winter from the world has gone,
Death shall be no longer!
Far away good angels drive
Night and sin and sadness;
Earth awakes in smiles, alive
With her dear Lord's gladness.

Roused by Him from dreary hours
Under snow-drifts chilly, —
In His hand He brings the flowers,
Brings the rose and lily.
Every little buried bud
Into life He raises;
Every wild-flower of the wood
Chants the dear Lord's praises.

Open, happy flowers of spring,
For the Sun has risen!
Through the sky glad voices ring,
Calling you from prison.
Little children dear, look up!
Toward His brightness pressing,
Lift up every heart, a cup
For the dear Lord's blessing!

NATURE'S EASTER-MUSIC.

THE flowers from the earth have arisen,
They are singing their Easter-song;
Up the valleys and over the hillsides
They come, an unnumbered throng.

Oh, listen! The wild-flowers are singing
Their beautiful songs without words!
They are pouring the soul of their music
Through the voices of happy birds.

Every flower to a bird has confided
The joy of its blossoming birth —
The wonder of its resurrection
From its grave in the frozen earth.

For you chirp the wren and the sparrow,
Little Eyebright, Anemone pale!

Gay Columbine, orioles are chanting
Your trumpet-note, loud on the gale.

The buttercup's thanks for the sunshine
The goldfinch's twitter reveals;
And the violet trills, through the bluebird,
Of the heaven that within her she feels.

The song-sparrow's exquisite warble
Is born in the heart of the rose —
Of the wild-rose, shut in its calyx,
Afraid of belated snows.

And the melody of the wood-thrush
Floats up from the nameless and shy
White blossoms that stay in the cloister
Of pine-forests, dim and high.

The dust of the roadside is vocal;
There is music from every clod;
Bird and breeze are the wild-flowers' angels,
Their messages bearing to God.

"We arise and we praise Him together!"
With a flutter of petals and wings,
The anthem of spirits immortal
Rings back from created things.

And nothing is left wholly speechless;
For the dumbest life that we know
May utter itself through another,
And double its gladness so!

The trees have the winds to sing for them;
The rock and the hill have the streams;
And the mountain the thunderous torrents
That waken old Earth from her dreams.

She awakes to the Easter-music;
Her bosom with praise overflows;
The forest breaks forth into singing,
For the desert has bloomed as the rose.

And whether in trances of silence
We think of our Lord arisen,
Or whether we carol with angels
At the open door of His prison,

He will give us an equal welcome
Whatever the tribute we bring;
For to Him who can read the heart's music
To blossom with love is to sing.

FARTHER ON.

We two went Maying up the hill—
  Our little Hal and I—
Led onward by a linnet's trill;
The wind was soft, the sea was still,
  And violet-blue the sky.

And blue as glimpses of the sea
  Shone level violet-beds,
Far down below bare crag and tree;
And, sweetly shy as flowers can be,
  White wind-flowers hung their heads.

Great crowds of scarlet columbines
  Made sunrise in the wood,
Against the darkness of the pines;
In lilac gauze amid green vines
  The wild geranium stood.

There are no hillsides pleasanter
  Than ours, far on in May;
Light sea-winds leaf and blossom stir,
Never grew wood-flowers lovelier,
  And yet I could not stay.

Some strange bewildering of the hour
  My restless footsteps won;
Some whisper from a pine-tree bower,
Some fragrance of an unseen flower
  A little farther on.

Till on a summit gray with moss
  I found myself alone;
And saw, the billowy woods across,
The ocean-billows foam and toss,
  And heard from both one moan.

What had I gained by climbing there?
  The flowers were pale and thin
Around my feet; but all the air
Held hints of unknown sweetness rare,
  Hid sky and wave within.

My boy-mate bounded up the steep,
  His lithe arms heaped with bloom—
A treasure for a day to keep:
Saw he that grand horizon sweep,
  That glory of vast room?

I know not; but his flowers were bright,
And full of perfume, too;
And he had felt a keen delight
In every sound and smell and sight,
The cheerful woodland through.

Yet hope I that he may not rest
In earthly sweetness won;
Since we in seeking are most blest,
And life hides evermore its best
A little farther on.

THE RIVULET.

RUN, little rivulet, run!
Summer is fairly begun.
Bear to the meadow the hymn of the pines,
And the echo that rings where the waterfall shines;
Run, little rivulet, run!

Run, little rivulet, run!
Sing to the fields of the sun,
That wavers in emerald, shimmers in gold,
Where you glide from your rocky ravine, crystal-cold;
Run, little rivulet, run!

Run, little rivulet, run!
Sing of the flowers, every one:
Of the delicate harebell and violet blue;
Of the red mountain rosebud, all dripping with dew;
Run, little rivulet, run!

Run, little rivulet, run!
Carry the perfume you won
From the lily, that woke when the morning was gray,
To the white waiting moonbeam adrift on the bay;
Run, little rivulet, run!

Run, little rivulet, run!
Stay not till summer is done!
Carry the city the mountain-birds' glee;
Carry the joy of the hills to the sea;
Run, little rivulet, run!

THE BROWN THRUSH.

THERE 's a merry brown thrush sitting up in the tree,
"He 's singing to me! He 's singing to me!"
And what does he say, little girl, little boy?
"Oh, the world 's running over with joy!
Don't you hear? don't you see?
Hush! Look! In my tree
I 'm as happy as happy can be!"

And the brown thrush keeps singing, "A nest do you see,
And five eggs, hid by me in the juniper-tree?
Don't meddle! don't touch! little girl, little boy,
Or the world will lose some of its joy!
Now I 'm glad! now I 'm free!
And I always shall be,
If you never bring sorrow to me."

So the merry brown thrush sings away in the tree,
To you and to me, to you and to me;
And he sings all the day, little girl, little boy,
"Oh, the world 's running over with joy!
But long it won't be,
Don't you know? don't you see?
Unless we are as good as can be!"

A HAREBELL.

MOTHER, if I were a flower
Instead of a little child,
I would choose my home by a waterfall,
To laugh at its gambols wild,
To be sprinkled with spray and dew;
And I 'd be a harebell blue.

Blue is the color of heaven,
And blue is the color for me.
But in the rough earth my clinging roots
Closely nestled should be;
For the earth is friendly and true
To the little harebell blue.

I could not look up to the Sun
As the bolder blossoms look;
But he would look up with a smile to me
From his mirror in the brook;
And his smile would thrill me through,—
A trembling harebell blue.

The winds would not break my stem
When they rushed in tempest by;
I would bend before them, for they come
From the loving Hand on high,
That never a harm can do
To a slender harebell blue.

I would play with shadow and breeze;
I would blossom from June till frost.
Dear mother, I know you would find me out,
When my stream-side cliff you crossed;
And I 'd give myself to you, —
Your own little harebell blue.

PUSSY-CLOVER.

Pussy-Clover 's running wild,
Here and there and anywhere,
Like a little vagrant child
Free of everybody's care.

All unshaded roadsides know
Pussy-Clover's sunburnt head,
That by cabin door-steps low
Lifts itself in tawny red.

Lady-Rose is shy and proud;
Maiden-Lily bashful-sweet:
Pussy-Clover loves a crowd,
Seeks the paths of hurrying feet.

When tow-headed children run
Jostling to the railway track,
Pussy-Clover 's in the fun,
Nodding forward, nodding back.

Matters little who sits there,
In the thundering car swept by;
Blossoms bow, and children stare,
Neither offering reason why.

Downy heads to hoary turn;
Scarcely noted is the change:
But the fair world's face grows stern;
Wayside blossoms wan and strange.

Like all faithful, homely things,
Pussy-Clover lingers on
Till the bird no longer sings,
And the butterfly is gone.

When the latest asters go,
When the golden-rod drops dead,
Then, at last, in heaps of snow
Pussy-Clover hides her head.

HAL'S BIRTHDAY.

FOUR years old when the blackberries come!
After the roses have blossomed and gone,
And you only hear the wild-bee's hum
In the bough that the robin sang upon.

Columbines will not nod from the rock,
Nor blue-eyed violets hide in the grass,
Nor the wind with the sweet-breathed clover talk,
When pussy and I down the meadow pass.

But she will run after me, all the same,
With her spotted back and her frisky tail,
And will stop and look when I call her name,
Or spring at my curls from the high fence-rail.

Cherries and strawberries, you may go;
We shall not fret about you in the least,
Out where the plump, sweet blackberries grow, —
Pussy and I, at my birthday feast.

If there 's a grasshopper left in sight,
Or a locust spinning his long, dry tune,
They are the guests that we will invite
To eat with us in the shade at noon.

Overhead will the sky be blue,
And the grass we tread will be short and green,
And a late field-daisy — one or two —
Will, may be, among the vines be seen.

And perhaps, perhaps I shall go to the wood
Where the pines bend down to the feathery ferns,
And the cardinal-flowers bloom as red as blood,
And the moss to gold in the sunshine turns.

And there I shall gather my basket full
Of fragrant clethra as white as snow,
And partridge-berries and club-moss pull,
And play by the pond where the lilies grow.

Mother, and all of us, — pussy, too, —
Will eat our supper under the trees,
Before it is time for the sunset dew;
Then loiter homeward, slow as we please;

Watching the squirrels peep from the wall,
  Mocking the whistle of scared chewink,
Hearing the cows for the milkers call;
  Pleasant our walk will be, I think.

Months of summer will soon pass by;
  Time slips along, who is guessing how?
Fast and faster the merry days fly;—
  But don't you wish it was August now?

BERRYING SONG.

Ho! for the hills in summer!
  Ho! for the rocky shade,
Where the groundpine trails under the fern-leaves,
  Deep in the mossy glade.
Up in the dewy sunrise,
  Waked by the robin's trill;
Up and away, a-berrying,
  To the pastures on the hill!

Red lilies blaze out of the thicket;
  Wild roses blush here and there:
There 's sweetness in all the breezes,
  There 's health in each breath of air.
Hark to the wind in the pine-trees!
  Hark to the tinkling rill!
Oh, pleasant it is a-berrying
  In the pastures on the hill!

We 'll garland our baskets with blossoms,
  And sit on the rocks and sing,
And tell one another old stories,
  Till the trees long shadows fling;
Then homeward, with laughter and carol,
  Mocking the echoes shrill.
Oh, merry it is a-berrying
  In the pastures on the hill!

HAPPY FIELDS OF SUMMER.

Happy fields of summer, all your airy grasses
Whispering and bowing when the west wind passes,—
Happy lark and nestling, hid beneath the mowing,
Root sweet music in you, to the white clouds growing!

Happy fields of summer, softly billowed over
With the feathery red-top and the rosy clover,

Happy little children seek your shady places,
Lark-songs in their bosoms, sunshine on their faces!

Happy little children, skies are bright above you,
Trees bend down to kiss you, breeze and blossom love you;
And we bless you, playing in the field-paths mazy,
Swinging with the harebell, dancing with the daisy!

Happy fields of summer, touched with deeper beauty
As your tall grain ripens, tell the children duty
Sweeter is than pleasure; — tell them both are blended
In the best life-story, well begun and ended!

LITTLE HUGH.

LITTLE Hugh is awake at the breaking of day,
And out in the sunny fields beaded with dew;
Wherever I wander, I soon hear him say
From somewhere behind, "Here is Hugh!
Now where are you going? I want to go, too!"

At noon, when no bird can be heard in the tree,
And the air is still as if wind never blew,
As brisk as a little red squirrel is he;
On the doorstep he cries, "Here is Hugh!
Now where shall we go? I am going with you!"

If I hide by the side of a tumble-down wall,
Or under a sweet-brier clump, out of view,
Or deep in the meadow, his laugh and his call
Ring close to my ear, "Here is Hugh!
Wherever you go, I am going with you!"

On the warm pasture-ground all around us there grow
Wild grasses, and blossoms so sweet, — not a few!
He runs hither and thither, with brown cheeks aglow,
And a flower in his hand: "Here is Hugh!
And oh! here is something so pretty, for you!"

We look into the sky, Hugh and I, and we trace
In the clouds every moment a fantasy new, —
An angel, a lamb, or a soft baby-face;
And he says, "Stay till sunset! for Hugh
Likes to look at the clouds and make pictures, with you."

The still, lonely hillside before me lies green;
It holds in its shadow a little lake blue;
And a small, sunburnt boy always slips in between,
With a dance and a shout: "Here is Hugh!
You can't get away! I am going with you!"

And the wish that I send, little friend, far away,
Where you rove here and there in the prairie-lands new,
Is that they whom you follow may not lead astray,
When you trustingly call, "Here is Hugh!
Wherever you go, I am going with you!"

NID-NODDING.

NID-NID-NODDING in the sun,
Poppy buds hang over, one by one;
All the garden alleys glow with heat;
Slow and languid are the little feet,
Glad to linger in the doorway cool,
Home at noon from school.

Nid-nid-nodding in the sun,
Where the lazy little brooklets run
Through the meadow, swings an idle bird;
Chirps the faintest carol ever heard,
Twittering through the tinkle of the rill;
Then the nest is still.

Nid-nid-nodding in the sun,
Droop the heavy grasses, every one,
Kissing down the drowsy laddie's eye;
Croons a locust from the field close by:
Lost in dells of dream-land, cool and deep,
He is fast asleep.

SWINGING ON A BIRCH-TREE.

SWINGING on a birch-tree
To a sleepy tune,
Hummed by all the breezes
In the month of June!
Little leaves a-flutter,
Sound like dancing drops
Of a brook on pebbles;
Song that never stops.

Up and down we seesaw:
Up into the sky;
How it opens on us,
Like a wide blue eye!
You and I are sailors
Rocking on a mast;
And the world's our vessel:
Ho! she sails so fast!

Blue, blue sea around us;
  Not a ship in sight!
They will hang out lanterns
  When they pass, to-night.
We with ours will follow
  Through the midnight deep;
Not a thought of danger,
  Though the crew's asleep.

Oh, how still the air is!
  There an oriole flew;
What a jolly whistle!
  He 's a sailor, too.
Yonder is his hammock
  In the elm-top high:
One more ballad, messmate!
  Sing it as you fly!

Up and down we seesaw;
  Down into the grass,
Scented fern, and rosebuds,
  All a woven mass.
That 's the sort of carpet
  Fitted for our feet!
Tapestry nor velvet
  Is so rich and neat.

Swinging on a birch-tree!
  This is summer joy,
Fun for all vacation;
  Don't you think so, boy?
Up and down to seesaw,
  Merry and at ease,
Careless as a brook is,
  Idle as the breeze!

LITTLE NANNIE.

FAWN-FOOTED Nannie,
  Where have you been?
"Chasing the sunbeams
  Into the glen;
Plunging through silver lakes
  After the moon;
Tracking o'er meadows
  The footsteps of June."

Sunny-eyed Nannie,
  What did you see?
"Saw the fays sewing.
  Green leaves on a tree;

Saw the waves counting
The eyes of the stars;
Saw cloud-lambs sleeping
By sunset's red bars."

Listening Nannie,
What did you hear?
"Heard the rain asking
A rose to appear;
Heard the woods tell
When the wind whistled wrong;
Heard the stream flow
Where the bird drinks his song."

Nannie, dear Nannie,
Oh, take me with you,
To run and to listen,
And see as you do!
"Nay, nay! you must borrow
My ear and my eye,
Or the beauty will vanish,
The music will die."

A LILY'S WORD.

Oh, my delicate lily,
Blossom of fragrant snow,
Breathing on me from the garden,
How does your beauty grow?
Tell me what blessing the kind heavens give!
How do you find it so sweet to live?

"One loving smile of the sun
Charms me out of the mould:
One tender tear of the rain
Makes my full heart unfold. —
Welcome whatever the kind heavens give,
And you will find it as sweet to live."

PURPLE SANDWORT.[1]

'T is a little roadside flower,
Glad of leave to live an hour,
Just to wonder and to doubt
What the world can be about.

[1] Usually called "Red Sandwort:" its color is really a pale amethyst-purple.

Tiniest rosy-purple stars
Strewn beneath the pasture-bars,
Or along the path, so small,
Few perceive a flower at all.

Burning sand and burning sun
This small blossom loves as one;
Well content in drawing thence
One short hour of light intense.

Opal rays it gathers up
In its tinted baby-cup,
Drinks and gives its draught of sun,
Then its pleasant life is done.

Opals are but sand refined;
These are gems, — a simpler kind;
All the light around they fling,
That can fill so small a thing.

Pretty sand-stars! ye have wrought
Round our feet a mesh of thought:
Clinging to the wagon's track,
Finding there nor loss nor lack:

Happy in your patch of sand
As the rose in gardens grand;
Happier, since a spot so bare
Feels your life, your tints can wear.

Just to live is joy enough,
Though where roads are dull and rough.
Fill your cup and share it! can
More be done by flower or man?

ROSEBUD.

Oh, little maid, in your rosebud-bower,
  Dreaming of growing old,
Wishing youth always would linger, a flower
  Never in haste to unfold:
Lift from the shadow your sunshiny head!
Growing old is nothing to dread!

Oh, little maid, in the rose-tree shade,
  See how its dry boughs shoot!
The green leaves fall, and the blossoms fade;
  But youth is a living root.
There are always buds in the old tree's heart,
Ready at beckon of spring to start.

Oh, little maid, there is joy to seek,
Glory of earth and sky,
When the rosebud-streak fades out of your cheek,
And the dewy gleam from your eye:
Deeper and wider must life take root;
Redder and higher must glow its fruit.

Oh, little maid, be never afraid
That youth from your heart will go:
Reach forth unto heaven, through shower and shade!
We are always young, while we grow.
Breathe out in a blessing your happy breath!
For love keeps the spirit from age and from death.

GRACE AND HER FRIENDS.

YOUR walk is lonely, blue-eyed Grace,
Down the long forest-road to school,
Where shadows troop, at dismal pace,
From sullen chasm to sunless pool.
Are you not often, little maid,
Beneath the sighing trees afraid?

"Afraid, — beneath the tall, strong trees,
That bend their arms to shelter me,
And whisper down, with dew and breeze,
Sweet sounds that float on lovingly,
Till every gorge and cavern seems
Thrilled through and through with fairy dreams?

"Afraid, — beside the water dim
That holds the baby-lilies white
Upon its bosom, where a hymn
Ripples forth softly to the light
That now and then comes gliding in,
A lily's budding smile to win?

"Fast to the slippery precipice
I see the nodding harebell cling:
In that blue eye no fear there is;
Its hold is firm, the frail, free thing!
The harebell's Guardian cares for me:
So I am in safe company.

"The woodbine clambers up the cliff
And seems to murmur, 'Little Grace,
The sunshine were less welcome, if
It brought not every day your face.'
Red leaves slip down from maples high,
And touch my cheek as they flit by.

"I feel at home with everything
That has its dwelling in the wood;
With flowers that laugh, and birds that sing;
Companions beautiful and good,
Brothers and sisters everywhere;
And over all, our Father's care.

"In rose-time or in berry-time,
When ripe seeds fall or buds peep out,
While green the turf or white the rime,
There 's something to be glad about:
It makes my heart bound just to pass
The sunbeams dancing on the grass.

"And when the bare rocks shut me in
Where not a blade of grass will grow,
My happy fancies soon begin
To warble music, rich and low,
And paint what eyes could never see:
My thoughts are company for me.

"What does it mean to be alone?
And how is any one afraid,
Who feels the dear God on His throne
Sending His sunshine through the shade,
Warming the damp sod into bloom,
And smiling off the thicket's gloom?

"At morning, down the wood-path cool
The fluttering leaves make cheerful talk;
After the stifled day at school,
I hear, along my homeward walk,
The airy wisdom of the wood,
Far easiest to be understood.

"I whisper to the winds; I kiss
The rough old oak and clasp his bark;
No farewell of the thrush I miss;
I lift the soft veil of the dark,
And say to bird and breeze and tree,
'Good night! Good friends you are to me!'"

THE BROOK THAT RAN INTO THE SEA.

"Oh, little brook," the children said,
"The sea has waves enough;
Why hurry down your mossy bed
To meet his welcome rough?

"The Hudson or the Oregon
May help his tides to swell:

But when your few bright drops are gone,
What has he gained, pray tell?"

"I run for pleasure," said the brook,
Still running, running fast;
"I love to see you bend and look,
As I go bubbling past.

"I love to feel the wild weeds dip;
I love your fingers light,
That dimpling from my eddies drip,
Filled with my pebbles bright.

"My own mysterious life I love,
Its shadow and its shine;
And all sweet voices that above
Make melody with mine.

"But most I love the mighty Voice
Which calls me, draws me so,
That every ripple lisps, 'Rejoice!'
As with a laugh I go.

"My drop of freshness to the Sea
In music trickles on:
Nor grander could my welcome be
Were I an Amazon.

"And if his moaning waves can feel
My sweetness near the shore,
Even to his heart the thrill may steal: —
What could I wish for, more?

"The largest soul to take love in
Knows how to give love best;
So peacefully my tinkling din
Dies on the great Sea's breast.

"One heart encircles all that live,
And blesses great and small;
And meet it is that each should give
His little to the All."

THE SING-AWAY BIRD.

HAVE you ever heard of the Sing-away bird,
That sings where the Runaway River
Runs down with its rills from the bald-headed hills
That stand in the sunshine and shiver?

"And if his moaning waves can feel." Page 146.

"Oh, sing! sing-away! sing-away!"
How the pines and the birches are stirred
By the trill of the Sing-away bird!

And the bald-headed hills, with their rocks and their rills,
To the tune of his rapture are ringing;
And their faces grow young, all the gray mists among,
While the forests break forth into singing.
"Oh, sing! sing-away! sing-away!"
And the river runs singing along;
And the flying winds catch up the song.

'T was a white-throated sparrow, that sped a light arrow
Of song from his musical quiver,
And it pierced with its spell every valley and dell
On the banks of the Runaway River.
"Oh, sing! sing-away! sing-away!"
The song of the wild singer had
The sound of a soul that is glad.

And, beneath the glad sun, every glad-hearted one
Sets the world to the tune of his gladness:
The swift rivers sing it, the wild breezes wing it,
Till Earth loses thought of her sadness.
"Oh, sing! sing-away! sing-away!"
Oh, sing, happy soul, to joy's Giver,—
Sing on, by Time's Runaway River!

THE MAGIC FLOWER.

When I was a little child
On the seaward hillsides playing,
By my pretty dreams beguiled,
Hither, thither, went I straying.

Sometimes 't was a fairy-book;
Sometimes, my own fancy's spinning;
Laugh of sunbeam, lisp of brook;—
Who has tracked a dream's beginning?

Once I heard my blithe heart say,
Like a queen within her bower,
"Child, come forth! we will to-day
Seek the magic leaf and flower.

"Often have we read of them
In old legends, wizard-haunted,
Where a daisy's diadem
Crowns some hidden prince enchanted.

"What if, on the hill-top there,
Lady bright or noble lover
Still in fragrant bondage were,
Stifled, shut in rose or clover?"

So my heart and I went forth
On the wide gray hills together,
All our homely northern earth
Glowing in the radiant weather.

And, oh wonder! where I trod
Sprang a gold-and-purple glory
Never seen before! the sod
Read to me a fairy story!

Disk and ray so star-like were!
This was the enchanted blossom:
I was its discoverer: —
How my heart danced in my bosom!

Who could guess but at its root
My true knight for me was waiting;
Royal playmate, crowned, though mute,
Smiling through his prison-grating?

Long I kept my secret well;
But the blossom passed, unwitting,
Whither, I could never tell;
Who has tracked a fairy's flitting?

"It was but a common flower,"
Afterward the cold years told me:
Still my childhood's dream has power
With a sweet warmth to enfold me.

Out of elf-land's magic haze
Many a wise, clear voice has spoken:
And the old enchantment stays,
Though the enchanter's spell is broken.

Though no witch-wand may unroll
From a wild-flower human features,
Every form implies a soul:
God makes only living creatures.

Ever since, fresh mysteries
From the ground I tread have risen;
Each sweet spirit flower-like is,
Blooming in its earthly prison.

Every blossom gives a hint
Of some friend I know and cherish,

In its grace of mien or tint: —
Friends and flowers, alas, must perish!

Still, of both, the life remains, —
All they gave me of their glory:
And upon celestial plains
I may read their perfect story.

PLAYTHINGS.

Not much to make us happy
Do any of us need;
But just the right thing give us,
And we are rich indeed.

Even as with men and women
It is with girls and boys;
Why should you shower on Jeanie
So many dear-bought toys?

Some bits of broken china,
A handful of corn-floss,
A shred or two of ribbon,
A strip of velvet moss;

With her family of rag-children,
And the wide clean earth around, —
No happier little housewife
Can anywhere be found.

But Nannie dear would rather
Leave Jeanie to her play,
And wander by the streamlet,
Or on the hill-top stray.

For a little white cloud passing,
A ripple on the brook,
Much more her heart enriches
Than playhouse, doll, or book.

Half Nannie's wealth lies hidden
Under the rock's green shelf:
You cannot find it for her;
She keeps the key herself.

Wild John likes forest-freedom,
And room for boundless noise,
Better than spending-money,
Or a cityful of toys.

And small Ned with a shingle
Digs in his heap of sand;
Never swayed Inca sceptre
Upon a throne so grand.

With large and little children
The trouble is the same;
What pleases us, to others
Is wearisome and tame.

Good friends, your entertainment
A well-meant plan may be;
But he 's our benefactor
Who simply leaves us free.

FLOWER-GIRLS.

Oh, my little seaside girl,
What is in your garden growing?
"Rock-weeds and tangle-grass,
With the slow tide coming, going;
Samphire and marsh-rosemary
All along the wet shore creeping;
Sandwort, beach-peas, pimpernel,
Out of nooks and corners peeping."

Oh, my little prairie girl,
What 's in bloom among your grasses?
"Spring-beauties, painted cups,
Flushing when the south-wind passes:
Beds of rose-pink centaury;
Compass-flowers, to northward turning;
Larkspur, orange-gold puccoon;
Leagues of lilies flame-red burning."

Oh, my little mountain girl,
Have you anything to gather?
"White-everlasting bloom,
Not afraid of wind or weather:
Sweet-brier, leaning on the crag
That the lady-fern hides under;
Harebells, violets white and blue:
Who has sweeter flowers, I wonder?"

Oh, my little maidens three,
I will lay your pretty posies,
Sea-scented, cloud-bedewed,
Prairie grasses, mountain roses,

On a bed of shells and moss;
Come and bend your bright heads nearer!
Though your blossoms are so fair,
You three human flowers are dearer!

SWING AWAY.

SWING away,
From the great cross-beam,
Hid in heaps of clover-hay,
Scented like a dream.

Higher yet!
Up, between the eaves,
Where the gray doves cooing flit
Through the sun-gilt leaves.

Here we go!
Whistle, merry wind!
'T is a long day you must blow,
Lighter hearts to find.

Swing away!
Sweep the rough barn floor;
Looking through on Arcady,
Framed in by the door!

One, two, three!
Quick! the round red sun,
Hid behind yon twisted tree,
Means to end the fun.

Swing away,
Over husks and grain!
Shall we ever be as gay,
If we swing again?

A LITTLE CAVALIER.

WHEN I was very young indeed,—
Ages ago, my dear, —
I had, to stand by me at need,
A little cavalier;
The prettiest lad I ever met,
Black-eyed, red-cheeked, and fat:
His face I never can forget;
His name? Well — it was Nat.

I saw him first one pleasant day,
Beside his mother's door;
His third year had not slipped away,
And I was scarcely four.
Upon his arm a wooden gun
He bore right soldierly;
I know not which it was first won
My heart, that gun or he.

There never was a clumsier trap
By child of mortal seen.
A button at its side went — snap!
The gun was painted green.
But, shouldering it with martial tread,
Proudest of girls was I;
While like a flag above his head
Would my pink bonnet fly.

For Nat I gathered currants fine,
And flowers that bloomed around;
Though only yellow celandine
And blue gill-over-the-ground
Grew underneath the gray stone-wall,
Still they retain their charm —
Those homely blossoms which recall
That early sunshine warm.

I never tasted gingerbread,
Or doughnuts crisp and new,
But in my mother's ear I said,
"For little Nat some, too."
The days were dull and dark when him
To school I could not lead.
That love like ours at last grew dim
A pity seems, indeed.

To me he brought no cake or toy;
But then you know, my dear,
That he was nothing but a boy,
And boys have ways so queer!
They do not stop to think of things
That give us girls delight;
But take the best that fortune brings
As if it were their right.

'T was no such trifle made us part:
He loved my gifts to take,
And it was comfort to my heart
To see him eat my cake.
It happened thus: One afternoon,
As from the school we came, —
The day was sultry, late in June,
Our faces both aflame, —

Beneath the blooming locust-trees
We loitered, I and Nat;
His hair was lifted by the breeze;
I firmly held his hat
By its long bridle-string of green,
And lightly held his hand:
No happier tiny twain were seen
Than we, in all the land.

A freckled girl was passing by,
And down she gazed at me,
As if we children, Nat and I,
Were something strange to see.
I looked at him and looked at her;
Why did she scan us so?
The cruel words she uttered were,
"I guess you 've got a beau!"

"A beau! What! he?" At once I dropped
The little hand and hat,
And home I ran, and never stopped
Till I lost sight of Nat.
A beau! Some monstrous thing, no doubt,
All tusks and fangs and claws;
The one they read to me about
A *boa-constrictor* was.

None did I with my grief annoy,
None should my terror know;
But, oh, I wondered if a boy
Must always be a beau!
And so my happy days were done!
That innocent-looking Nat,
The owner of that darling gun,
How came *he* to be *that?*

Nat's doorstep nevermore I sought;
No sign of woe gave he;
Much more of him I doubtless thought
Than ever he of me.
Forgetting is not hard, for men
As young as he, my dear,
And so I lost him there and then,—
My little cavalier.

A FACE IN THE TONGS.

A CHILD'S round face in the tongs;
She is rubbing the brasses bright,
While merry old-fashioned nursery-songs
She croons with a child's delight.

She sees in the glittering sphere
  Her broadened baby-face
Smiling back on itself with a wordless cheer,
  And filling the globe-like space.

Little friend, by my name once known,
  I am rubbing the tongs to-day;
But the face that I gaze on you would not own,
  It has lost your child-look gay.

Oh, your world was golden and glad:
  Your happy heart was enough,
Though that and the sunshine were all you had,
  And earth underfoot was rough.

But one thing I learned from you
  I have not forgotten, quite;
No pleasanter work can a mortal do
  Than to keep one small world bright.

And, thinking about you, dear,
  The face in the tongs has smiled;
In a dream I went back to your shining sphere,
  And played with myself, a child.

A LITTLE OLD GIRL.

WHAT is this round world to Prudence,
  With her round, black, restless eyes,
But a world for knitting stockings,
  Sweeping floors, and baking pies?

'T is a world that women work in,
  Sewing long seams, stitch by stitch;
Barns for hay, and chests for linen;
  'T is a world where men grow rich.

Ten years old is little Prudence;
  Ten years older still she seems,
With her busy eyes and fingers,
  With her grown-up thoughts and schemes.

Sunset is the time for candles;
  Cows are milked at fall of dew,
Beans will grow, and melons ripen,
  When the summer skies are blue.

Is there more than work in living?
  Yes; a child must go to school,
And to meeting every Sunday;
  Not a heathen be, or fool.

Something more has haunted Prudence
In the song of bird and bee,
In the low wind's dreamy whisper
Through the light-leaved poplar-tree.

Something lingers, bends above her,
Leaning at the mossy well;
Some sweet murmur from the meadows,
On the air some gentle spell.

But she will not stop to listen: —
May be there are witches yet!
So she runs away from beauty,
Tries its presence to forget.

'T is the way her mother taught her;
Prudence is not much to blame.
Work is good for child or woman;
Childhood's jailer, — 't is a shame!

Meanwhile at the romping children
Their grave heads the gossips shake;
Saying, with a smile for Prudence,
"What a good wife she will make!"

IN FAIRY-LAND.

A LITTLE knight and little maid
Met on the rim of Fairy-Land;
A rippling stream betwixt them played;
The little knight reached out his hand,

And said, "Now may I cross to you,
Or will you come across to me?"
Out spoke the little maiden true:
"Sir Knight, nor this nor that can be:

"For I am here white flowers to sow,
That little maidens far behind,
Or wandering on the plains below,
Their pathway up the hill may find.

"And you are there good work to do;
To clear the brambles from the way,
That little knights who follow you
May not upon the mountains stray.

"But see! the stream, as up we climb,
Is narrowing to a rivulet.
Hark! airy bells above us chime,
And nearer every hour we get.

"Up where the fountain falls in gold
It lies — the cool, sweet Fairy-Land,
Where child-hearts never can grow old;
And we will walk there, hand in hand.

"And in that country strange and blest,
We 'll find some lovely work to do
For many an earth-bewildered guest, —
For wearier folk than I or you.

"And upward, upward as we go,
The fairy-secret we shall guess —
The secret that we almost know —
Of living other hearts to bless.

"Sweet voices call us through the air;
New languages we understand.
Is this our own world, grown so fair?
Sir Knight, we are in Fairy-Land!"

IF I WERE A SUNBEAM.

If I were a sunbeam,
I know what I 'd do:
I would seek white lilies
Rainy woodlands through;
I would steal among them,
Softest light I 'd shed,
Until every lily
Raised its drooping head.

"If I were a sunbeam,
I know where I 'd go:
Into lowliest hovels,
Dark with want and woe;
Till sad hearts looked upward,
I would shine and shine;
Then they 'd think of heaven,
Their sweet home and mine."

Art thou not a sunbeam,
Child, whose life is glad
With an inner radiance
Sunshine never had?
Oh, as God has blessed thee,
Scatter rays divine!
For there is no sunbeam
But must die, or shine.

A CHILD'S NIGHT-THOUGHTS.

THEY put her to bed in the darkness,
And bade her be quiet and good;
But she sobbed in the silence, and trembled,
Though she tried to be brave as she could.

For the Night was so real, so awful!
A mystery closing around,
Like the walls of a deep, deep dungeon,
That hid her from sight and sound.

So stifling, so empty, so dreary —
That horror of loneliness black!
She fell asleep, moaning and fearing
That morning would never come back.

A baby must bear its own sorrow,
Since none understands it aright;
But at last from her bosom was lifted
That terrible fear of the night.

One evening the hands that undressed her
Led her out of the door close by,
And a voice bade her look for a moment
Up into the wonderful sky,

Where the planets and constellations,
Deep-rooted in darkness, grew
Like blossoms from black earth blooming,
All sparkling with silvery dew.

It seemed to bend down to meet her —
That luminous purple dome;
She was caught up into a glory,
Where her baby-heart was at home,

Like a child in its father's garden,
As glad as a child could be,
In the feeling of perfect protection
And limitless liberty.

And this had been all around her,
While she shuddered alone in bed!
The beautiful, grand revelation,
With ecstasy sweet she read.

And she sank into sound child-slumber,
All folded in splendors high,
All happy and soothed with blessings
Breathed out of the heart of the sky.

And in dreams her light, swift footsteps
Those infinite spaces trod;
A fearless little explorer
Of the paths that lead up to God.

The darkness now was no dungeon,
But a key into wide release;
And the Night was a vision of freedom—
A Presence of heavenly peace.

And I doubt not that in like manner
Might vanish, as with a breath,
The gloom and the lonely terror
Of the mystery we call Death.

STARLIGHT.

MOTHER, see! the stars are out,
Twinkling all the sky about;
Faster, faster, one by one,
From behind the clouds they run.
Are they hurrying forth to see
Children watching them, like me?

Oft I wonder, mother dear,
Why so many stars appear
Through the darkness every night,
With their little speck of light:
Hardly can a ray so small
Brighten up the world at all.

"Ah, you know not, little one,
Every dim star is a sun
To some planet-circle fair,
In its far-off home of air:
Rays that here so faint you call
There in radiant sunshine fall.

"I have sometimes wondered, too,
(Scarcely wiser, dear, than you,)
Why unnumbered souls had birth
On this wide expanse of earth;
Wondered where the need was shown
For so many lives unknown.

"He who calls the stars by name,
At his mighty word they came
Out of heaven's deep light, to bless
Life's remotest wilderness.
Every soul may be a sun;
You and I, too, little one!"

THE LAST FLOWER OF THE YEAR.

THE gentian was the year's last child,
Born when the winds were hoarse and wild
With wailing over buried flowers,
The playmates of their sunnier hours.

The gentian hid a thoughtful eye
Beneath dark fringes, blue and shy,
Only by warmest noon-beams won,
To meet the welcome of the sun.

The gentian, her long lashes through,
Looked up into the sky so blue,
And felt at home; the color there
The good God gave herself to wear.

The gentian searched the fields around;
No flower-companion there she found.
Upward, from all the woodland ways
Floated the aster's silvery rays.

The gentian shut her eyelids tight
On falling leaf and frosty night;
And close her azure mantle drew,
While dreary winds around her blew.

The gentian said, "The world is cold;
Yet one clear glimpse of heaven I hold.
The sun's last thought is mine to keep!
Enough — now let me go to sleep."

WHAT THE TRAIN RAN OVER.

WHEN the train came shrieking down,
Did you see what it ran over?
I saw heads of golden brown,
Little plump hands filled with clover.
Yes, I saw them, boys and girls,
With no look or thought of flitting;
Not a tremble in their curls; —
Where the track runs they were sitting.

From the windows of the train
I could see what they were doing;
I could see their faces, plain:
Some with dreamy eyes pursuing

Flight of passing cloud or bird;
  Others childish ditties flinging
On the air; I almost heard
  What the song was they were singing.

They were well-known faces, too;
  Do you marvel that I shiver
As I picture them to you
  Playing there beside the river?
With them I myself have played
  On that very spot: I wonder
Why I never was afraid
  Of the coming railway-thunder.

Little, sunburnt, barefoot boys
  In the shallow water wading,
Sea-birds scattering with your noise,
  Ragged hats your rogue-looks shading,
Will your sparkling eyes upon
  Yonder waves again flash never?
Is your heartsome laughter gone
  From the tired old world forever?

Dimpled Ruth, with brow of snow!
  Never thought I to outlive her,
While we watched the white boats go
  Up and down the small tide-river,
Past dark steeps of juniper,
  Ever widening, ever flowing
To the sea; I mourn for her,
  Gone so far beyond my knowing!

Well, the cruel train rolls on.
  What! your eyes with tears are filling
For my pretty playmates gone?
  Child, I am to blame for chilling
All your warm young fancies so:
  There are real troubles, plenty!
They lived — forty years ago;
  And the road has run here twenty.

And those children, — I was one, —
  Busy men and women, wander
Under life's midsummer sun.
  One or two have gone home yonder
Out of sight. But still I see
  Golden heads amid the clover
On the railway-track; to me
  This is what the train runs over.

THE BARN WINDOW.

THE old barn window, John, —
  Do you remember it, —
How just above it, on the beam,
  The tame doves used to sit,
And how we watched the sunshine stream
  Through motes and gossamer,
When down they fluttered, John,
  With such a breezy whirr?

I think the sunsets, John,
  Are seldom now as red;
They used to linger like a crown
  Upon your auburn head,
From the high hayloft looking down
  To tell me of the nest
The white hen hid there, John, —
  The whole brood's handsomest!

Those times were pleasant, John,
  When we were boy and girl,
Though modern young folk style them "slow;"
  Alack! a giddy whirl
The poor old world is spinning now,
  To stop, who guesses when?
Be thankful with me, John,
  That we were children then!

Have you forgotten, John,
  That Wednesday afternoon
When the great doors were opened wide,
  And all the scents of June
Came in to greet us, side by side,
  In the high-seated swing,
Where flocks of swallows, John,
  Fanned us with startled wing?

Up to the barn eaves, John,
  We swung, two happy things,
At home and careless in the air
  As if we both had wings.
The mountain-side lay far and fair,
  Beyond the blue stream's shore;
I cried, "Swing higher, John!"
  And — fell upon the floor.

Next time I saw you, John,
  You stood beside my bed;
Tears trembled in your clear boy-glance;
  I thought that I was dead,

But felt my childish pulses dance
To be beside you still:
I lived to love you, John,
As to the end I will.

We swing no longer, John;
We sit at our own door,
And watch the shadows on the hill,
The sunshine on the shore.
But the window in the barn is still
A magic-glass to me;
For through its cobwebs, John,
Our childhood's days I see.

BLACK IN BLUE SKY.

An artist one day at his easel stood,
And sketched, with a pencil free,
The gold of the meadow, the green of the wood,
And the purple and gray of the sea;
A child stood watching, a little way back,
And questioned the artist, "Why
Do you mix with your color a touch of black,
When you paint the blue of the sky?"

"Because there is black in the blue, my child;
I am painting the sky as it is!"
And he softly said, while he sadly smiled,
"It is one of earth's mysteries:
Not the lily itself wears a perfect white,
Nor the red rose an unmixed dye:
There is light in shadow, and shadow in light,
And black in the blue of the sky."

There are films over nature everywhere
To soothe and refresh our sight;
For mortal eyes were not made to bear
The dazzle of undimmed light.
Our consolation and our complaint;
Awaking both smile and sigh:
There are human faults in the holiest saint,
Like the black in the blue of the sky.

What then? Shall we say that the skies are not blue,
Lilies white, nor the roses red?
Shall we doubt whether ever the crystal dew
Drops pearls on the paths we tread?
We may dwell where there is no blur in the air,
Over beauty no veil, by and by:
But good is good always and everywhere,
Though black may steal into blue sky.

A ROADSIDE PREACHER.

DEAD, is he, — in a pauper's bed,
The good old Larkin Moore?
Was there no place for that white head,
None but the workhouse floor?
Oh, bear him out with reverent tread,
Under blue heaven once more!

He came and went across our youth
Like some arisen saint.
He flung his random dart of truth
In fashion wild and quaint:
His figure and his garb, in sooth,
Were something strange to paint.

His tunic fluttered in the wind,
Each thin hand held a cane;
With silvery locks blown far behind,
He hurried through the lane,
Some straggling listener to find,
And seldom sought in vain.

For often, in the dusty street,
Men paused from work to hear
The echoes of the hills repeat
The shrill voice of the seer;
And boys forgot each playful feat,
And idly clustered near.

The baby left its mother's arm
To hear the old man sing;
And cream-white fingers, plump and warm,
Around his lips would ring,
To pluck the song's mysterious charm;
The winsome, witless thing!

And little girls, upon a bank
Of blossoms red and white,
Pausing amid some pretty prank,
Their eyes with fun still bright,
Listened, while timidly they shrank;
It was a pleasant sight:

For he was harmless in his mood,
And told, with cheerful tone,
True stories of the wise and good,
To Hebrēw ages known:
In ways we little understood,
His seeds of truth were sown.

And so he wandered east and west,
And up and down the land:
We wondered if, at night, his rest
Were on the hard, bare sand;
He surely had one sheltering nest, —
The hollow of God's hand.

It seemed to us he could not die,
Nor yet with years grow old.
His home was somewhere in the sky,
For aught we could have told;
And had he, wingless, tried to fly,
Who would have thought him bold?

Thou weird apostle of the Past,
Among the shoots of May
Was thy unsifted seed-grain cast;
And with her blossoms gay
The wayside word has bloomed at last,
More beautiful than they.

Dead? In thy right mind thou dost sit
Upon Life's farther shore,
Bathed in the Light that men of wit
With dazed eyes shrink before;
While on a pauper's grave is writ,
"Here slumbers Larkin Moore."

OUR LADY OF THE LILIES.

Our Lady of the lilies —
The valley-lilies fair!
Her brow was pure as any babe's,
And silvery-white her hair.

The snows of ninety winters
Had fallen upon her head;
Within her clear, benignant eyes
A history sweet you read.

She walked among the flowers
That her own hands had sown;
With lilies-of-the-valley white
Her paths were overgrown.

Through the old, grassy garden
Year after year they stole;
Their fragrance seemed the very breath
Of our dear Lady's soul.

She gave away her lilies
  Freely as wild birds sing;
They bore to sick and lonely ones
  The first glad hint of spring.

Our Lady of the lilies
  Loved other blossoms, too;
She was our Sweet-Pea Grandmamma,—
  The dearest flower she knew.

With earliest heats of summer
  Came forth the sweet-pea's blush,
Pink as the soft tint of her cheek,
  Or sunset's last, faint flush.

And, clipping bud and tendril
  In morning's dewiest hours,
Her thoughts on lovely errands ran:—
  "Now, who shall have my flowers?"

Surely her love was in them,
  Like sun and dew and air;
For sweet-peas wonderful as hers
  Blossomed not anywhere.

They crowded through the fence-rail,
  They sprang to meet her touch,
All winged and waiting for a flight:
  Where shall we now find such?

And oh! what fairer blossoms
  Can grow around her feet,
In that new country where she walks,
  Within heaven's climate sweet?

I think they must have brought her
  The dear, old-fashioned flowers,
Before her heart felt quite at home
  Even in the angels' bowers.

Our Lady of the lilies
  Even there her name may be;
While here fond memories cling to her
  As Grandmamma Sweet-Pea.

"LIKE ANY OTHER LITTLE GIRL."[1]

A LITTLE girl across the sea
Lives in a palace: one of three
Gay little princesses is she,
  Light-hearted as the greenwood merle,
And fond as any child of play;
Fond, too, of having her own way;
And she would keep her holiday
  Like any other little girl.

She would not have the soldiers go
Before, behind her, in a row,
That all the gazing crowd might know
  She was of Queen Victoria's blood;
And so the royal children spent
Their holiday in merriment
Without alloy, because they went
  As any other children would.

Wise little Maude! to learn so soon
That, underneath the sun and moon,
God gives to none a richer boon
  Than His own breath, our common air;
To think our thought as others think,
Our life with other lives to link,
And out of one full cup to drink,
  Free unto all men, everywhere.

Nothing that grandest, loveliest is,
In all this lovely world of His,
Was made alone for princesses:
  The toiler's child can see the sky,
And feel the sun, and pluck the flower,
And catch the beauty of the hour,
And be at home with that Great Power
  Who takes no note of low or high.

Wise little princess! always so
In happy freedom come and go!
And yet — this world is full of woe,
  And little people in the whirl
Of care, and crime, and pain are caught:
Give to their piteous fate a thought!
Not all the blessings of your lot
  Fall upon every little girl.

[1] The three daughters of the Prince of Wales having been promised a visit to the Tower of London, Maude, the youngest, insisted that she would not go unless she could go "just like any other little girl." She carried her point, and the royal children had a good time according to their own ideas.

Yet they are also princesses;
A King their Father; each, being His,
A child of heavenly lineage is,
  Just like yourself, dear Princess Maude!
And pale indeed is every gem
That stars your future diadem
Beside the crown-rays lighting them —
  Your sisters, daughters of your God.

Ah! be it ever your sweet will
To share their load of good and ill!
So glory that is queenlier still
  Than gleam of ruby or of pearl
Your sign of royalty will be;
By right of your humanity
Heiress of all things glad and free,
  Like any other little girl!

THE COUNTRY BOY.

"I PITY the poor little country boy,
  Away on his lonely farm!
The holidays bring him no elegant toy;
He has no money, there is no shop;
Even Christmas morning his work does n't stop:
He has cows to milk, he has wood to chop,
  And to carry in on his arm."

Did you hear that, Fred, as you came through the gate,
  With your milk-pail full to the brim?
No envy hid under your curly brown pate;
You were watching a star in the morning sky,
And a star seemed shining out of your eye;
Your thoughts were glad, you could n't tell why,
  But they were not of toys, or of *him*.

Yet the city boy said what he kindly meant,
  Walking on by his mother's side,
With his eyes on the toy-shop windows bent,
Wishing for all that his eyes could see;
Longing and looking and teasing went he,
Nor dreamed that a single pleasure could be
  Afar in your woodlands wide.

You ate your breakfast that morning, Fred,
  As a country boy should eat;
Then you jumped with your father upon the sled,
And were off to the hills for a load of wood;
Quiet and patient the oxen stood,
And the snowy world looked cheerful and good,
  While you stamped, to warm your feet.

Then your father told you to take a run,
And you started away up the hill;
You were all alone, but it was such fun!
The larch and the pine-tree seemed racing past
Instead of yourself, you went so fast;
But, rosy and out of breath, at last
You stood in the sunshine still.

And all of a sudden there came the thought,
While a brown leaf toward you whirled,
And a chickadee sang, as if they brought
Something they meant on purpose for you,
As if the trees to delight you grew,
As if the sky for your sake was blue, —
"It is such a beautiful world!"

The graceful way that the spruce-trees had
Of holding their soft, white load,
You saw and admired; and your heart was glad,
As you laid on the trunk of a beech your hand,
And beheld the wonderful mountains stand
In a chain of crystal, clear and grand,
At the end of the widening road.

Oh, Fred! without knowing, you held a gift
That a mine of gold could not buy;
Something the soul of a man to lift
From the tiresome earth, and to make him see
How beautiful common things can be;
How heaven may be glimpsed through a wayside tree;
The gift of an artist's eye!

What need had you of money, my boy,
Or the presents money can bring,
When every breath was a breath of joy?
You owned the whole world, with its hills and trees,
The sun, and the clouds, and the bracing breeze,
And your hands to work with; having these,
You were richer than any king.

When the dusk drew on, by the warm hearth-fire,
You needed nobody's pity;
But you said, as the soft flames mounted higher,
And the eye and cheek of your mother grew bright,
While she smiled and talked in the lovely light, —
A picture of pictures, to your sight, —
"I am sorry for boys in the city!"

SNOW-FANCIES.

Oh, snow! flying hither,
And hurrying thither,
Here, there, through the air — you never care whither —
Do you see me here sitting,
A-knitting, a-knitting,
And wishing myself with you breezily flitting,
Like any wild elf?

Each light as a feather,
The merry flakes gather
In rifts and in drifts, glad enough of cold weather;
Gay throngs interlacing,
On the slant roofs embracing,
They slip and they fall! down, down they are racing,
I after them all!

One large flake advances:
'T is a white steed that prances;
At the bits, as he flits, how he foams, like my fancies!
Up softly I sidle
From where I sit idle, —
I snatch, as it flies, at the gossamer bridle, —
I am mounted, I rise!

Away we are bounding,
No hoof-note resounding,
Still as light is our flight through the armies surrounding;
No murmur, no rustling,
Though millions are jostling;
A host is in camp, but you heard neither bustling,
Nor bugle, nor tramp.

And the truce-flag is lifted!
Unfurled it lies drifted
Over hill, over rill, where its snow could be sifted;
And now I 'm returning
To parley concerning
The beautiful cause that awakened my yearning;
The trouble that was.

Ho! ho! a swift fairy, —
A pearl-shallop airy!
I am caught, quick as thought! fleece-muffled and hairy,
Her grim boatman tightens
His grasp, and he frightens
Me sore, as we sail to the east, where it lightens
On waves of the gale.

White, dimpled, and winning,
The fairy sits spinning,
From her hair, floating fair, coils of cable beginning
Her shallop to tether
In stress of bleak weather,
While the boatman and I, wrapped in ermine together,
Drift on through the sky.

Stay! the boat is upsetting!
My fairy, forgetting
Her coil and her toil, to escape from a wetting,
Has now the one notion:
Below boils the ocean!
I scream, — I am heard! up, in arrowy motion,
I am borne by a bird; —

A gray eagle! — over
The seas flies the rover;
And I ride as his guide, a new world to discover.
He bears me on, steady,
Through whirlwind and eddy;
I cling to his neck, and he ever is ready
To pause at my beck.

White doves through the ether
Come flocking together:
How they crowd to me, proud if I smooth one soft feather!
Oh, what is the matter?
They startle, — they scatter!
On the wet window-pane hear my eagle's claws clatter! —
The snow 's turned to rain!

ON THE STAIRWAY.

The little children on the stairway,
Cased in a slippery glare of sleet,
By post and railing vainly clamber;
Slight hold is there for baby-feet.
High in the cold air swings the school-bell:
"Come up! come up!" its clang commands:
A quick thought flies from lips to fingers, —
"'T is easier, taking hold of hands."

Now laughter lights their rosy faces;
Strong arms the faltering strugglers lift;
Now all at last have won the threshold,
And out of sight within they drift,
Flinging back bloom upon the snow-wreaths;
The blank, white world reflects their smile;
Their word has cleared for us a pathway,
Though Alps of ice the highroad pile.

We all are children on a stairway,
Weary of vain attempts to climb,
Or, strong ourselves, forgetting others;
While silver peals of duty chime
High in the beckoning heaven above us;
And, welcome we or dread the call,
Upon the steps we may not linger;
Ascend we must, slide back, or fall.

Whose is the fault if this one stumbles,
If that laments a hopeless bruise,
Or if another sits despairing?
Yours, mine, who timely aid refuse.
Small honor to go up unhindered,
While a tired brother by us stands:
The little children, they shall teach us;
"'T is easier, taking hold of hands."

Still up and down on Virtue's ladder
Unnumbered beings come and go,
With faces turned to nether darkness,
Or sunned with a celestial glow.
The truants out of Duty's heaven,
The white and dazzling seraph-bands,
Are brethren still; and, struggling upward,
"'T is easier, taking hold of hands."

THE TAMBOURINE-GIRL.

I REMEMBER a dear little girl
Whose feet kept time to a tambourine,
The sunless walls of the street between.
Her hair had a breezy curl,
Her brown eye was merry and wild,
That gay little child
Who danced up and down
The brick-red walks of the tiresome town.

I watched her day after day;
And I wished I could have her for my own,
To dance in the fields, among daisies blown,
With the wind in her hair at play,
And her heart as light as a breeze,
Swaying under the trees
Unto bird-notes, swung
Through the blossomed boughs that above her hung.

That little motherless maid!
(No mother would let her darling go
Through the wicked streets of the city so)

I know not where she has strayed;
But her memory shadows my dreams,
And her brown eye gleams
Upon me in reproof
That I hold so long from her fate aloof.

Every sweet little girl I see
Growing up like a rose at a cottage-door,
Or softly at play on the forest floor,
Or under the orchard tree,
Seems to murmur in my ear,
So sadly, so clear!
"Alas! we miss a mate!
For the dear little dancing girl we wait."

Yet I knew not her home or name;
And one and another passed her by,—
Nobler and richer women than I.—
To whom belongs the blame,
When a blossom of snow and fire
Trodden down in the mire
Of the city is seen?
Ah me! for my child with the tambourine!

LITTLE BRIDGET'S COUNTRY WEEK.

THROUGH the bleak December day
Little pale-faced Bridget lay
On her shabby trundle-bed,
Covered with a threadbare spread.

Down the dim and dingy wall
Scarce a sunbeam crept at all;
Or, if one astray did come,
Never seemed it quite at home.

Little Bridget lay alone,
Trying not to cry or moan
For her mother, who must stay
Out at work the livelong day.

No one by her bedside sat;
Rusty stove and ragged mat,
Chair and table, window, door,
Her companions;—nothing more.

Poor the room was, poor and plain;
But the narrow window-pane
Let her out into free air,
Into landscapes wide and fair.

Out beyond the dreary street
Sped her fancy's flying feet,
Over hillside, meadow, dell:
Ah! she knew it all so well!

Once, when summer days were long,
Once, when she was brisk and strong,
Kind hands bore her far away
Into the green fields to play.

Oh, the happy Country Week,
When the children went to seek
Flowers and sunshine on the hills,
Far away from city ills!

Little Bridget lived it over:
Smelt again the sweet red clover;
Watched the frisky squirrels play,
Fed the birds, and tossed the hay.

All the beautiful wild-flowers
Came to cheer her lonesome hours;
Smiling, one by one they came, —
Blossoms she had learned to name:

Hardhack, with its pale, pink spire;
Cardinals, flashing crimson fire;
Golden daisies, through the bars
Shining up at her, like stars.

Once more, on the river's breast
Large white lilies swayed in rest;
Waved for her the meadow-sweet;
Pussy-clover brushed her feet.

Once again her footsteps turn
Toward the woodlands, fresh with fern;
Up the hill, and down the lane:
'T was the Country Week again.

Little Bridget's eyes were bright
When her mother came, that night.
"Thoughts have wings," she said, "and I
With them through the window fly.

"I forget the cold," she said,
"I forget my aching head,
While I wander, long, long hours,
As I used to, gathering flowers."

Brighter little Bridget's eyes
Shone with wonder and surprise,

Gazing on her window-pane
When the morning dawned again.

Who had been there in the night,
Tracing, all in outlines white,
Blossoms, ferns, and feathery grass
On her little square of glass?

Nodding harebells, daisy-stars,
Pine-clad cliffs, and even the bars
That she used to clamber through
Into fields where lilies grew.

Down the chill gray dawning fell
Echoes of a Christmas bell!
Little Bridget scarce could speak,
But a flush suffused her cheek,

And her heart with joy grew faint. —
"Mother, did the angels paint
Flowers and ferns I used to see,
For a Christmas gift to me?

"More than common flowers they seem:
Mine in many a happy dream
They have been before; they grow
In the fields of heaven, I know.

"In my dreams they bloom so fair!
And the little children there
With me lovely blossoms seek; —
Heaven is like the Country Week!"

Happy Bridget! more than health,
More than luxury or wealth,
Hers the blessed gift, to find
Beauty where the world is blind!

And her angel-guides they were
Who in summer went with her,
Beauty's secret to explore,
One glad week, by hill and shore.

Heaven's great gates are open here!
Angels far and angels near
Toward the little children lean,
Winning them to pastures green.

And no grand cathedral shows
Windows half so fine as those
Little Bridget gazed upon
In the cold, white Christmas dawn.

For the heavenly artists brought
Their own seeing to her thought;
Taught her from her heart to paint; —
Little Bridget, baby-saint!

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT.

Oh, Christmas is coming again, you say,
And you long for the things he is bringing:
But the costliest gift may not gladden the day,
Nor help on the merry bells ringing.
Some getting is losing, you understand,
Some hoarding is far from saving;
What you hold in your hand may slip from your hand;
There is something better than having:
We are richer for what we give;
And only by giving we live.

Your last year's presents are scattered and gone;
You have almost forgotten who gave them;
But the loving thoughts you bestow live on
As long as you choose to have them.
Love, love is your riches, though ever so poor;
No money can buy that treasure;
Yours always, from robber and rust secure,
Your own, without stint or measure:
It is only love that can give;
It is only by loving we live.

For who is it smiles through the Christmas morn, —
The Light of the wide creation?
A dear little Child in a stable born,
Whose love is the world's salvation.
He was poor on earth, but He gives us all
That can make our life worth the living;
And happy the Christmas Day we call
That is spent, for His sake, in giving:
He shows us the way to live;
Like Him, let us love and give!

AT NIGHTFALL.

What is it that we children feel,
When by our little beds we kneel,
And speak to Some One out of sight
Above the heavens so high, so bright?
It scarce is wonder, scarce is fear,
That thrills our thoughts, of Some One near.

American Antiquarian Society
BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

We say "Our Father!" when we wake.
What, with the sunrise, seems to break
Through every flower, like a surprise —
As if a thousand loving eyes
Looked out from sunbeams, buds, and dew,
And said, "He is our Father, too!"

We little children stand and gaze
At the white evening star, whose rays
Beam down upon us, like an eye
Forever open in the sky;
Through the strange twilight asking this
Of one another: "Is it His?"

We little children find it sweet
To cling about His unseen feet,
When in some troubled dream we moan,
And wake to find ourselves alone;
So sweet, that we are in His care
Who sees us, loves us, everywhere!

Who is He? That we cannot say.
He is. And by His side to stay,
To love Him in the flowers and birds,
In dear home-faces, tender words,
In all things beautiful and true, —
No more than this we ask to do.

Our Father, every day more dear
It seems to live, with Thee so near.
Thou carest for even the smallest star,
And safe within thy heart we are.
If left alone on earth are we,
We are not orphans! we have Thee!

CHRISTMAS GREEN.

Bring in the trailing forest-moss,
Bring cedar, fir, and pine,
And green festoon, and wreath, and cross,
Around the windows twine!

Against the whiteness of the wall
Be living verdure seen,
Sweet summer memories to recall,
And keep your Christmas green.

It is His dear memorial-day,
Who broke Earth's frozen sleep,

And who for her hope's gladdening ray
Forever bright will keep.

He gives all loveliness that grows:
The strong and graceful trees,
The winter moss, the fresh June-rose,
The dear Lord saves us these,

Who saves us from the piteous wreck
Of souls adrift in sin:
So not alone the churches deck,
But peaceful homes within, —

Made peaceful by His constant love, —
Let thoughts of Him abide!
To find us our lost home above,
He homeless lived and died.

And where would be the heart to smile,
Where any cheer or mirth,
If from its sin-blot, black and vile,
He could not cleanse the earth?

Not for a superstition's sake,
Borne down from ages dead,
We love to see this morning break
In sunshine overhead;

Not as a day of heedless mirth,
A feast-day rude and wild,
We hail its dawn, — but for the birth
Of the world's dearest Child,

We keep the bright home-festival;
And, with a childlike cheer,
His angel-ushered birthday call
The merriest of the year.

Yes, — merry Christmas let it be!
A day to love and give!
Since every soul's best gift is He
Who came that we might live;

And all things beautiful are His,
And His He maketh ours;
So bring each bud that bursting is,
All Christmas-blooming flowers;

All blossoms that in windows shine,
With leaves to light unfurled, —
In memory of that Flower Divine
Whose fragrance fills the world!

Be all old customs honored so,
That good to others mean!
Bring cross and garland from the snow,
And keep your Christmas green!

WINTER.

"WHO is that white-faced old man
Outside, at the window-pane,
That muttered and sighed, as away he ran
Into the sleet and rain,
Crying to some one behind;
Calling to some one before;
One whom he cannot find,
One who will come no more?"

That old man has sisters three;
One he has never seen;
On a throne of roses afar sits she,
And the whole world owns her a queen:
But out of her riches and power
Nothing has she to spare —
Not so much as a flower —
For the lonesome wanderer there.

One sister beside him delayed,
And tries his thin fingers to hold;
But the storm her garments shredded and frayed,
And she sank benumbed with the cold.
And ever he prays and cries,
And over her silence grieves;
Behind him, alas! she lies
Buried in golden leaves.

One happy young face before
Looks back, between cloud and drift,
With a sudden smile, and is seen no more;
And the pilgrim follows, swift
As a flash of the noon-day light;
With wail and reproach and shout
He follows, through day and night,
Till again the face peeps out.

This fairest sister of all
Will laugh in the old man's face,
Will challenge him onward with merry call,
To measure with her a race,
Till, weary and lame, he falls,
Amid rosebuds and springing fern:

She flies with the wind; he calls;
  But never will she return.

For the pale-faced pilgrim without
  Is Winter, the lonesome king,
Calling back to Autumn with dreary shout,
  And hurrying on toward Spring.
As Summer rules over the flowers,
  Over ice and snow reigns he:
Lo! there at the pane he glowers,
  And shakes his white sceptre — see!

MY CHILDREN.

THEY are a beauteous family,
    Sweet sisters and brave brothers;
Too many for one house, you see,
And so I have to let them be
    In care of other mothers.

They go by other names than mine,
    But names have little meaning:
They know me by some secret sign;
And roseleaf cheeks and fingers fine
    Towards me come clinging, leaning.

None of them all I claim alone —
    With other hearts I share them;
But this the common lot is known:
All mothers, when their babes are grown,
    To the wide world must spare them.

My loveliest children never go
    Out of my happy dwelling;
No mortal parentage they know,
Though on the walls "Correggio"
    And "Raphael" you are spelling.

Not quite so dear as flesh and blood,
    They are to me most real:
In them I see heaven's childhood bud;
These little human stars that stud
    The skies of the Ideal.

That land of glorious mystery
    Whither we all are wending
A lonely sort of heaven will be,
If there no baby-family
    Awaits my love and tending.

Windows of mansions in the skies
Must glow with infant faces,
Or somewhere else is Paradise:
The lovely laughter of their eyes
Lights up all heavenly places.

My darlings! by my mother-heart
I have found, I shall find them:
Though some from me are worlds apart,
And, thinking of them, tears will start
Into my eyes, and blind them.

O little ones whom I have found
Among earth's green paths playing,
Though listening far behind, around,
There comes to me no sweeter sound
Than words I hear you saying!

O little ones whom I shall see
On floors of golden glory,
I guess how fair your looks will be
When your sweet voices lisp to me
Your beautiful new story!

It was a little Child who swung
Wide back that City's portal
Where hearts remain forever young;
And, all things good and pure among,
Shall childhood be immortal.

WILD ROSES OF CAPE ANN. Page 181.

WILD ROSES OF CAPE ANN.

WILD ROSES OF CAPE ANN.

WILD roses of Cape Ann! A rose is sweet,
No matter where it grows; and roses grow,
Nursed by the pure heavens and the strengthening earth,
Wherever men will let them. Every waste
And solitary place is glad for them,
Since the old prophet sang so, until now.
But our wild roses, flavored with the sea,
And colored by the salt winds and much sun
To healthiest intensity of bloom, —
We think the world has none so beautiful.
Even from his serious height, the Puritan
Stooped to their fragrance, and recorded them [1]
"Sweet single roses," maidens of the woods,
The lovelier for their virgin singleness.
And when good Winthrop with his white fleet came,[1]
Skirting the coast in June, they breathed on him,
Mingling their scent with balsams of the pine,
And strange wild odors of the wilderness:
Their sweetness penetrated the true heart
That waited in Old England, when he wrote
"My love, this is an earthly Paradise!"

No Paradise, indeed! the east wind's edge
Too keenly cuts, albeit no sword of flame!
Yet have romantic fancies bloomed around
This breezy promontory, ever since
The Viking with the commonest of names [1]
Left there his Turkish heroine's memory,
Calling it "Tragabigzanda." English tongues
Relished not the huge mouthful; and a son,
Christening it for his mother, made Cape Anne
Bloom with yet one more thought of womanhood.

But never Orient princess, British queen,
Left on this headland such wild blossoming

[1] Allusions to the early history of Cape "Anne" may be verified by referring to the Narrative of Captain John Smith; to the records of Hubbard, Higginson, Winthrop, and others; and to the local histories of the shore-towns of Massachusetts, northeast of Salem.

Of romance dashed with pathos — roses wet
With briny spray, for dewdrops — as to-day
Haunts the lone cottage of the fisherman,
In hopes half suffocated by despair,
When the Old Salvages foam and gnash their teeth,
And all the battered coast is vexed with storms
Down the long trend of Maine to Labrador.

Had Roger Conant, patriarch of the Cape,
Who left the Pilgrims as they left the Church,
To seek a fuller freedom than they gave —
Freedom to worship God in the ancient way,
Clothing the spirit's heavenward flight with form —
Had Roger Conant, kindliest of men,
One forethought of the flood of widow's tears
Wherewith this headland would be drenched, — the sea
Has no such bitter salt! — had he once dreamed
Of vessels wrecked by hundreds, amid shoals
And fogs of dim Newfoundland, he had left
Doughty Miles Standish an unchallenged claim
To every inch of coast, from Annisquam
To Marblehead. "What?" said the Plymouth folk,[1]
"Shall Conant seize our fishing-grounds? Shall he
Who went out from us, being not of us,
Take from our children's mouths their rightful food
For strangers who might stay at home, unstarved,
Unpersecuted? What does Conant mean?
Let Standish see!" The two met, face to face,
Lion and lamb: and first the lamb withdrew,
And then the lion; neither having found
Food for a quarrel on these ledges bare.
Standish sailed back to Plymouth; Conant sought
A quiet place, suiting a quiet man,
Lived unassuming years, and fell asleep
Among the green hills of Bass-River-Side.

So Tragabigzanda washed her granite feet,
Careless of rulers, in the eastern sea.
But still the hardy huntsmen of the deep
Clung to their rocky anchorage, and built
Homes for themselves, like sea-fowl, in the clefts;
And cabins grouped themselves in villages,
And billows echoed back the Sabbath bells,
And poetry bloomed out of barren crags,
With life, and love, and sorrow, and strong faith,
Like the rock-saxifrage, that seams the cliff,
Through all denials of east wind, sleet, and frost,
With white announcements of approaching spring;
Or like the gold-and-crimson columbines
That nod from crest and chasm, a merry crowd
Of rustic damsels tricked with finery,

[1] See footnote on page 181.

Tossing their light heads in the sober air:
For Nature tires of her own gloom, and Sport
Laughs out through her solemnities, unchid.

The sailor is the playmate of the wave
That yawns to make a mouthful of him. Songs,
Light love-songs youth and joy lilt everywhere,
Catch sparkle from the sea, and echo back
Mirth unto merriment — spray tossed toward spray.
Hark to the fisher, singing as he rocks,
A mote upon the mighty ocean-swell!

THE LITTLE BROWN CABIN.

I DREAM of it, tossing about in my skiff,
The little brown cabin just under the cliff;
The wild rose blown in at the window I see,
And Rose at the door, looking out after me:
My sweetheart, my wife,
The Rose of my life!

The sun in the doorway strikes gold from her hair;
The breeze fills the little brown house with salt air,
And she leans to its breath, as if over the sea
It were bringing a kiss and a message from me;
My pretty wild Rose,
The sweetest that grows!

I have not one wish from my darling apart,
The thought of her sweetens my soul and my heart;
And my boat like a bird flies across the blue sea
To the little brown cabin where Rose waits for me:
The Rose of my life,
My own blessed wife!

And hark — the gay voice of the skipper's bride!
The sea is but a wild delight to her,
Companion of her childhood, and its toy.
She loves no landsman, but her mariner
Lives in her heart, the very soul of the sea!

MY MARINER.

OH, he goes away, singing,
Singing over the sea!
Oh, he comes again, bringing
Joy and himself to me!

Down through the rosemary hollow
And up the wet beach I ran,
My heart in a flutter to follow
The flight of my sailor man.

Fie on a husband sitting
Still, in the house at home!
Give me a mariner flitting
And flashing over the foam!
Give me a voice resounding
The songs of the breezy main!
Give me a free heart bounding
Evermore hither again!

Coming is better than going;
But never was queen so grand
As I, while I watch him blowing
Away from the lazy land.
I have wedded an ocean-rover,
And with him I own the sea;
Yet over the waves, come over,
And anchor, my lad, by me!

Hark to his billowy laughter,
Blithe on the homeward tide!
Hark to it, heart! up and after —
Off to the harbor-side —
Down through the rosemary hollow,
And over the sand-hills, light
And swift as a sea-bird, follow!
And ho! for a sail in sight!

When the coast-country, from Bass River east
To Agawam, was known as Cape-Ann-Side,
Up from the ferry ran one winding road
Through pleasant Beverly, past Wenham Lake,
Losing itself in the Chebacco woods
Among a hidden chain of gem-like ponds:
A cow-path, so the ancient gossips say,
Branching upon the left through Ryal-Side,
To Salem Village; and upon the right,
Skirting the seashore down through Jeffrey's Creek
And the magnolia-swamp, to Sandy Bay,
And Pigeon Cove, and sheltered Annisquam.
Thanks to the zig-zag pioneering kine
For picturesque roads, impossible to spoil
By leveling or by straightening! Twoscore years
Of memory, and we have them back again,
Lovely with Nature's care and man's neglect;
Lanes, and yet highways, bordered with all growths
Of the rich glens and the primeval woods.

The shyest bird trilled frankly his best song
In the low boughs above you; from cool nooks
The graceful sweet-brier leaned, to show the way,
When the June twilight deepened. Even now
You slip into these rose-roads unaware,
Just out of reach of landscape-gardeners,
And farmers beauty-blind, whose synonym
For poison-oak and rose is — underbrush!

Some flavor of the natural wildness left
Compensates you for groves too clean and trim,
The ubiquitous French roof, the shaven lawns,
The modern villas posing on the verge
Of roadside-precipices, consciously,
In the Rhine-castle manner, — everything
That hints of Nature closely taken in hand
By patronizing Wealth, and stroked and smoothed
Into suburban elegance. Weather-worn
And homely were the ancient farmhouses,
But well they harmonized with the old ways,
Old roads, old woods, old faces, and old friends,
And all the sweet old mystery we call home.

Alas! simplicity and homeliness
Are studied now, among the finer arts,
And the old words lose their meaning!
Still the heart
Of childhood remains fresh, and poverty
And hardship shut its unspoiled fragrance in
To their safe coffers. Crowds of rosy cheeks,
And eyes that mock the morning, seaward turned,
Where the pink sails at sunset faded out
Far, far northeast, when, outward-bound, the fleet
Left home and love behind, and steered away
For the Grand Banks or Georges', grow and bloom
Along the wayside, climbing the stone walls,
Beckoning and smiling as wild roses do,
Looking for those who never will return.
The fisher's child scarce knows if sea or shore
Is most his home; and yet must Georges' name —
The dragon-shoal that counts his wrecks by scores —
Bring dreams of nightmare-terror to the babe
Who hears it only through a mother's moan.

AT GEORGES'.

THE children call out from the gate,
"Why is father staying so late?
We have almost forgotten his song,
So long since we heard it — so long!

The wind whistles after him over the sea;
We watch for him, shout for him; where can he be?
Oh, what is he doing at George's?
And why does he tarry at George's?"

The children have heard, through their sleep,
At nightfall, the sad mother weep:
"He will never, no, never again,
Come singing through sunshine and rain:
They are cruel at George's as cruel can be;
A desolate widow and orphans are we.
He sleeps his last sleep at George's;
He will never come home from George's."

Dreary indeed had been our fathers' lot —
Slain by their nurse, the Sea — had they been poor
In faith as fortune! But they trusted Him
Who taketh up the isles, and holds the waves
In the deep hollow of His hand; and so,
Bereft, they were not friendless. Men went forth
Warmed by a benediction in God's name
Breathed through His minister. The meeting-house,
That saw a wanderer in his place again
Upon a Sabbath-day, resounded thanks.
And when dread tidings came, of vessels lost
And crews gone down, words writ in widows' tears,
Through silence thick with heart-throbs, asked the prayers
Of all who loved them, that love's loss might bring
A "spiritual and everlasting good:" —
Always the same desire, the same strong phrase.

Are we, in our great churches, nearer God
Than they, that we have now no need to ask,
As persons, of a Person, of a Friend,
The help no human sympathy can give,
When sudden sorrow blinds us, and we see
Only a darkness, with His light behind?

Those dwellers by the sea believed in God:
Out of her need the widow heard Him say,
"Thy Maker is thy husband;" and was sure
Her orphans would be cared for.
Nothing strange
That where Death wrought so ruthlessly his work
Men grew to think of His as tenderer love
Than Calvin taught. And yet, the stern beliefs
That underlay the sinewy manliness
Of our dear State's first builders, — no great State
Had ever arisen without them. "Righteousness
Thy people's strength shall be," they wrote upon
Her fair foundation-stones — yet uneffaced;
Never to be effaced — so let us pray!

The psalms of David in the singing-seats
Of the old meeting-house; — bass-viol, flute,
And tuning-fork, — and rows of village-girls,
With lips half-open, — treble clashed with bass
In most melodious madness, — voices shrill
Climbing for unreached keys, grave burying soft
In solemn thunders; — fugues that rush and wait
Till lagging notes find the accordant goal, —
Who never heard has forfeited, through youth,
A rare experience. Since the untrained choir
Could lift the congregation, as one soul,
Their singing was true worship; and what more
Ask we of any ministry of song?
The hymns themselves (men call them tedious now)
Made their own music in the reverent heart
That never criticised when it could praise.
The voice of an unnumbered multitude,
A sound of many waters, — echoes swept
From age to age, — the universal Church
Uttering her glad thanksgivings unto Him
Who saves her for Himself, a spotless Bride,
Are in them — harmonies of deep to deep —
The children with the fathers praising God.

THE OLD HYMNS.

Our homely past we cannot lose:
The witch-wife's tingling tale
Adds a weird sparkle to these dews,
Spices this eastern gale.

The war-whoop and the tomahawk
Left iron in the air;
The Pilgrims' nerve and will of rock
Fell to their children's share.

But memory's voice grows low and thin,
As thunder, passing by,
Leaves a reverberating din,
Trailed faintly down the sky.

Still, wandering over field and hill,
And surging up the beach,
Are songs that wake a nobler thrill
Than our new singers teach.

The psalm-tunes of the Puritan;
The hymns that dared to go
Down shuddering through the abyss of man,
His gulfs of conscious woe;

That scaled the utmost height of bliss
Where the veiled seraph sings,
And worlds unseen brought down to this
On music's mighty wings:

The tunes the Plymouth Pilgrims sang
Upon the Mayflower's deck;
From hearts that knew no dread they rang,
And faith that feared no wreck.

The rapt strain hallowed the blue arch
Above the settler's farm,
And held him, in his forest march,
Closer to God's right arm.

Its sweetness drowned the savage yell
That jarred the Sabbath day,
And calmed, as with a halcyon spell,
The billows of the bay.

The mother lulled her babe to sleep
With those grand cadences,
And felt him folded safe and deep
Within God's mysteries.

And children's voices caught the sound,
And sent it up and down
In cherub-echoes, far around,
From seaside town to town.

From wild Nahant to Agawam,
Blent with the surf's hushed roar,
By creeks and curves of lonely Squam,
They floated down the shore.

The fisherman in Mackerel Cove
Rowed softly to the song;
By Mingo's Beach the farmer drove
More cheerily along;

And thought that He who died still walked
Upon the Atlantic Sea;
On these wild hills with plain men talked
As once in Galilee.

The green earth seemed an emerald floor,
The sky was sweet with prayer;
The sunset, heaven's wide-open door;
Nay, heaven was everywhere.

Then is it strange that at the sound
Of these old, hackneyed hymns

The pulses give a homesick bound,
  The eye with moisture swims?

The long, quaint words, the hum-drum rhyme,
  The verse that reads like prose,
Are relics of a sturdier time
  Than modern childhood knows.

There comes a loss for every gain;
  Some good drifts hourly by;
We tear up aged roots with pain,
  Though the old trees must die.

The radiance of the former hope
  Still beckons in the new;
Dear is the Present's widening scope,
  Dear the old landmark, too.

Ah! let us not forget the strength
  That more than beauty is;
The steadfast truth we prize at length
  Beyond weak tenderness!

And when we sing some hard old hymn,
  That rings like flint on steel,
Let not a shade of mockery dim
  The flame its words reveal.

But let our piping treble sound
  Harmonious as it may,
With music loftier, more profound,
  Of singers passed away!

Cape Ann has her own poets, nightingales
Warbling among her roses, rarely heard,
Except by those who woke that minstrelsy.
And she hath joy in other voices: hers
Who saw and pointed to the Gates Ajar
So earnestly, the world turned to look in;
And his whose rippling notes the Merrimack
Brings down to charm the coast with; Avery's chant,
Surging up from the seas and centuries
In dying triumph; and the marvelous tale
Of spectral soldiers at the garrison
In times of war and witchcraft; and that bard's
Whose tender Ballad of the Hesperus
Blooms, a sweet, pale, pathetic flower of song,
From the bare reef of Norman's Woe. Cool coves,
That open to blue breadths of sea; lost roads,
Wandering, bewildered, past forsaken homes,
House and inhabitant forgotten now,

And grass-grown cellar-hollows their sole sign;
Strange rocking-stones a-tilt for centuries;
White lily-ponds and dank magnolia-beds;
Sands that give music to your footstep; pines
Hoarse with forever answering the sea's moan,—
These will awaken to poetic life
In hearts of unborn minstrels. Though too late
For resurrection of dead legends now,
Though Woes and Miseries haunt us, unexplained,
Though all the dangerous coast is lighted up,
Safe as a city street by night,—the gleam
Of Straitsmouth, Eastern Point, and Ten Pound Light,
And Thacher's Isle, twin-beaconed, winking back
To twinkling sister-eyes of Baker's Isle,—
Prosaic names await romantic births.
Man makes his own traditions; life and death
And love and sorrow baffle commonplace;
And Poesy will find her wilderness
Of fancy to grow up in, blithely free
From pedant-theories of thus and so,
That fence the schools around.
Yon gaping gorge,
Where the sea wounds the half-unconscious land
Deeply and terribly, already knows
A tale more tragic than its name conceals,
Left by the visitors of a summer's day.

RAFE'S CHASM.

You come to it on level ground:
Sweet-fern and bayberry, close around,
The jutting crags hang over;
An echo of lost sound is Rafe,
The phantom of an unclaimed waif,
Doomed ever here to hover.

Rafe has no legend, but the chasm
Bears record of some torturing spasm
That wrenched these cliffs asunder,
When earth and sea in madness met;
The waves repeat their passion yet,
In throbs of rhythmic thunder.

A black gash torn into the land:
When tides are out, you safely stand
Within the abysmal hollow,
And see, across a shred of sky,
A pale rose look down tremblingly,
A swaying gull or swallow.

But when the sea returns, beware!
Though safely winds the cavern-stair,
  Trust not the treacherous billow!
Rafe moans within his dungeon-gates;
A demon for his victim waits;
  The smooth rock is death's pillow.

Just where you stand, a girl, one day,
Stood watching the impetuous play
  Of surges bellowing after
The baby-waves with ponderous bound,
That made the gorge, far in, resound
  With chords of savage laughter.

Unwrinkled as an infant's brow
The gray Sea's forehead; wondrous, how
  Out of so deep a quiet
So wild a tumult could unfold!
What inward, vast restraint controlled
  The elements in riot!

The calm of that great heaving breast
Lulled hers into enchanted rest;
  The stealthy tide crept nearer:
She heard her comrades' warning call
Break sharply down the beetling wall,
  Each instant sterner, clearer.

"Let me but wait for one wave more!"
The words were scarcely breathed, before
  A mighty billow lifted
The heedless maiden high upon
His giant crest, — and she is gone!
  Out into silence drifted.

What does the cold, bright ocean care
For shapes that gesture their despair
  Against the blue sky yonder?
Laughs the dim demon of the cave:
Of one more victim he can rave,
  When idlers hither wander.

Within his chasm, the ghost of Rafe
Sits like a mist, when east winds chafe
  The muttering sea to anger;
A phantom maiden by his side,
With spell-bound eyes, that open wide
  In trance of deathly languor.

Time and the waves wash lives away
Like wisps of sea-weed; each to-day
  Is drowned in some to-morrow:

And grief has ebb, as well as flow: —
Who shall give back to Norman's Woe
Its unremembered sorrow?

Earth writes her ancient anguish out
In solid rock; no dream, no doubt;
Obliterated never.
Man's troubled history who explains?
The mystery of ourselves remains
Forever and forever!

An aged sorcerer is the Sea; the years
Reverberate his glamourie in myths
Washed down from unknown shores of time: — the wiles
Of that ensnaring goddess borne in foam
Upon the sands of Paphos; siren-songs
That wise Ulysses dared not trust himself
To listen to unbound; blind shoals and rocks
Where Circe made men beasts; and Proteus' arts;
Rages of Scylla and Charybdis; — myths
Which are but the vague murmurs of a sea
Forever surging in the soul of man.

Still the magician by his sorcery holds
All whom he has enslaved: his grasp is firm;
His chains are riveted; and you are one
With the strange Power that will not let you go.

THE SEA'S BONDMAID.

I DO not love the Sea;
And yet he draweth me,
As the moon draws the unwilling tide —
Restless forever — to his side.

All night awake I lie,
And hear him toss and sigh
In vague, unreasoning distress
At his own homeless loneliness.

I do not seek the Sea;
And yet he followeth me
With that weird, haunting voice of his,
Through the sweet inland silences.

I love the west wind's breath,
That softly wandereth
Out of the forest-fragrance deep
A tryst of peace with me to keep.

Release me, sullen Sea!
I would be free of thee,
Far hidden among mountains green,
That laughing rivulets run between.

In vain! Thy monotone
Is as my own heart's moan:
Thy tides are pulses in my breast;
And thy unrest must be my rest!

And yet the Ocean weds the shore, sometimes,
With perfect interchange of light and joy;
Gently caressing the green fields, that smile
To meet him, putting on their freshest robes;
Land-birds to sea-birds singing; pines and oaks
Hastening down to unite the melodies
Of bough and billow: such are the blue sea
And the bright coast that meet within the curves
You follow, loitering around Kettle Cove
And Eagle Head, and past the Singing Sands,
And by the sea-fringed Farms of Beverly.

The loveliest scenery of that lovely town
Lay on its ocean border; miles of shore,
Verdant out to the verge of beach or cliff,
With varying tints of gardens, orchards, hills,
Evergreen forests, intermixed with growth
Of the light maple and the glimmering birch;
And quaint old homesteads, whose colonial date
Was hid far back among the Indian wars:
All washed by landlocked waters drowsily,
As by faint, lapsing, half-dreamed memories.

Beauty must still have contrast; yonder, see
Two tawny islands, floundering like whales
As near land as they dare — The Miseries —
The Great and Little Misery, made two
By a swift strait the cattle ford at ebb,
Ruminating as they wade: mere lumps of earth;
The least one takes the sea's brunt — buttresses
And bastions worn by the besieging East.
Once, landing on this Little Misery,
I saw it white with everlasting-flowers —
A snowy cloud upon the blue expanse,
Like those that float in heaven: I told myself
That other miseries might root amaranth.

ON THE MISERY.

LOOKING just off to the eastward
From the beautiful Beverly shore,
You will see two treeless islands
Stretching their blank before
The harbor-lights and the sea-waste gray,
A mile or more from the beach away.

These are the Misery Islands:
The name has been handed down
From the twilight of lost tradition;
The oldest man in the town
Has never heard his grandfather say
Why the Misery was the Misery.

They were clad in sombre forests
When the earliest settler came;
And the old-time hunter found them
A covert for noble game:
Every fish that swam, every fowl that flew,
The lonely nooks of the Misery knew.

They had cut off the trees for firewood
Long ere my grandsire's birth;
Still the wild duck came to their shelter,
And the loon, with his mocking mirth,
Made eddying inlet and pool resound,
When the sea was blue as the skies around.

The little ancestral cottage,
Shut in by a hillside wood,
With its windows opening seaward,
In a bower of orchards stood;
Over the marshes, away from the road,
Its ample hearth-fire at evening glowed.

A pastoral, homelike picture;
Rocks, grainfields, and summer flowers:
But when the wind howled in the chimney,
And autumn shortened the hours,
To be safe underneath its friendly roof
Was pleasanter far than straying aloof.

My grandsire arose, sea-restless;
The red dawn was threatening rain:
"Don't go to the Misery, husband!"
The kind lips murmured in vain:
He took his fowling-piece from the beam,
And rowed away by the lurid gleam.

My grandmother put by her spinning;
The day had been eerie and chill;
The hoarse wind rattled the windows,
And bent the great pines on the hill:
She laid her children in bed with a prayer,
And sat by the firelight, full of care.

"What keeps him away after sunset?
So bleak on the Misery!
And the night shutting in so stormy!
I wish he were here!" thought she.
When a wilder gust down the chimney blew,
And she heard the voice that so well she knew.

Louder than shriek of the tempest,
Clearer than ocean's rote,
She heard the cry of her husband:
"Wife! I have lost the boat!"
Nor thought for a moment it could not be,
With the Misery out a mile in the sea.

She latched the door on her children,
She wrapped her head from the blast,
And into the rain-drenched forest
With the speed of a wild deer passed,
Through the starless lane, and the long, dark roa
That led where her nearest kinsmen abode.

They turned to her, dazed and startled:
Had the storm burst in at the door?
What was it—a half-drowned woman,
Or a ghost, so white on the floor?
"My husband's adrift on the Misery;
Go you and fetch him away!" said she.

"He went with his gun and his dory,
And the boat has been washed away;
He is there, without food or a shelter!"
"And how can you know it?" ask they.
"He called, and I heard him."—"A woman's whim!
Who faces this furious gale for him?"

"Either I, or you, his brethren:
Go you, or myself will go!
The Hand that controls the tempest
Steers safely, and I can row!"
"Nay, stay you here by the fireside warm!
You never could weather so wild a storm."

They steer through the seething darkness;
The voyage is quickly made;
They have found him, watching and waiting,
As one who expected aid:

And he only said, as the boat drew near,
"I knew that God or my wife would hear."

A silent man was my grandsire;
But, half-way home through the wood,
He said, with a doubt born of safety,
"Wife, surely you never could,
In a gale so fearful, have heard my call,
Except by some witchcraft, after all!

"For it died on the wind like a whisper:
I scarcely could draw my breath;
And my voice was weak as a baby's,
While the sleet fell, cold as death!"
"Yes, witchcraft, husband! but such alone
As wives who are faithful have always known."

Oh, Love is a wonderful wizard!
He can see by his own keen light;
He laughs at the wrath of the tempest,
He has never a fear of the night.
Two lives that are wedded leagues hold not apart:
Love can hear, even through thunder, the beat of a heart!

A sunny, sea-blown cottage-nook was that, —
My father's home, his grandsire's father's home, —
Set where, as from a shoulder, her green cloak
The land trails to the ocean, and begins
The reach of Cape-Ann-Side. Upon the hills
The apple-trees met the descending pines;
Sweet-brier and garden-roses intertwined;
Nature and cultivation joined their hands
To make a home-like place; so buttercups
And daisies, dropped with English grass-seed, grew
Among strange blooms of the aboriginal woods,
And cheered the Pilgrim women with a thought
Of dear haunts left behind; their children now
Scarce know Old England's wild-flowers from our own,
But love the naturalized as the natural:
So in the human world, without, within,
Orson and Valentine live brotherly; —
Though art needs nature more than nature art.

A sunny, sea-blown nook, it gathered in
All strays and waifs: loose drifts of slavery,
Stranded in pitiful helplessness, dead weight
Upon their master's hands; or the lone shape
Of some Acadian exile — Gabriel
Homesick for his Evangeline — whose grief
Found no unburdening through his lips; not one
Who needed food or shelter turned aside,
Albeit a patriarchal family

Outgrew and overgrew the gambrel eaves —
A line of stalwart boys and vigorous girls,
Whose hands were their sole fortune, character
And trust in God their sole inheritance.
The boys went forth to face the winds and waves,
Hunters by sea and land; the girls grew up,
Loving, hard-working, patient homekeepers,
Their minds fresh with sea-freedom, all heaven's room
In the large aspiration of their faith.

Thank God for those old-fashioned sea-side folk,
And for the home that rooted their strong lives
For many generations. Virtues far
Outperfuming the rose, — pure souls, untouched
By the world's frosty standards, — are not these
True growths of our New England atmosphere,
By rarest of exotics unreplaced?
Strangers have found that landscape's beauty out,
And hold its deeds and titles. But the waves
That wash the quiet shores of Beverly,
The winds that gossip with the waves, the sky
That immemorially bends, listening,
Have reminiscences that still assert
Inalienable claims from those who won,
By sweat of their own brows, this heritage.
Fibres will cling, and odors haunt: the Past
Blooms deathless in the unforgetting heart,
A birthright flower, an immortality!

MY NAME-AUNT.

I CAN see her, as she grew
By the sea, in spray and dew,
Little girl and woman too.

Childhood soberly she wears,
Taking hold of woman's cares
Through love's outreach, unawares:

Glint of ocean, depth of sky,
Tenderness, intensity,
Blending in her large blue eye.

Fair she must have been, in sooth,
While the freshness of her youth
Blossomed out of inward truth;

Where the pathos of the wave
To her maiden feelings gave
Wistful wonder, sweetness grave.

Everybody called her good,
When, with steady feet, she stood
On the heights of womanhood.

Ere I saw her, locks of brown
Into silvery bands had grown;
Age had placed on her his crown.

Still in dreams her face I view —
Noblest that my childhood knew —
Motherly and saintly too.

Seriously my eyes she read;
Laid her hand upon my head, —
Once — again, — two brief words said:

Liquid syllables, that fell
On my child-heart like a spell:
My name, borne by her so well.

Softly, with a yearning grace,
Said she, searching still my face, —
"Never, dear, the name disgrace!"

Since that hour, I wear a charm
In the charge she gave; her arm
Shields from many an unseen harm.

And I bless her for an aim
Fixed upon the Best, that came
As my portion, with her name:

Name she gave me, that confers
Honor in its characters,
Standing for a life like hers.

And I fain would make it sweet
For the sea-winds to repeat
Where she strayed, with childish feet;

Down the beach, and through the wood,
Where she grew so gently good
In her wild-rose maidenhood.

A STRIP OF BLUE.

I DO not own an inch of land,
But all I see is mine;
The orchards and the mowing-fields,
The lawns and gardens fine.

The winds my tax-collectors are,
They bring me tithes divine,
Wild scents and subtle essences,
A tribute rare and free;
And, more magnificent than all,
My window keeps for me
A glimpse of blue immensity,
A little strip of sea.

Richer am I than he who owns
Great fleets and argosies;
I have a share in every ship
Won by the inland breeze,
To loiter on yon airy road
Above the apple-trees.
I freight them with my untold dreams;
Each bears my own picked crew;
And nobler cargoes wait for them
Than ever India knew,—
My ships that sail into the East
Across that outlet blue.

Sometimes they seem like living shapes,
The people of the sky,
Guests in white raiment coming down
From heaven, which is close by:
I call them by familiar names,
As one by one draws nigh.
So white, so light, so spirit-like,
From violet mists they bloom!
The aching wastes of the unknown
Are half reclaimed from gloom,
Since on life's hospitable sea
All souls find sailing-room.

The ocean grows a weariness,
With nothing else in sight;
Its east and west, its north and south,
Spread out from morn to night:
We miss the warm, caressing shore,
Its brooding shade and light.
A part is greater than the whole;
By hints are mysteries told.
The fringes of eternity,
God's sweeping garment-fold,
In that bright shred of glimmering sea,
I reach out for, and hold.

The sails, like flakes of roseate pearl,
Float in upon the mist;
The waves are broken precious stones;
Sapphire and amethyst

Washed from celestial basement walls,
By suns unsetting kissed.
Out through the utmost gates of space,
Past where the gray stars drift,
To the widening Infinite, my soul
Glides on, a vessel swift,
Yet loses not her anchorage
In yonder azure rift.

Here sit I, as a little child;
The threshold of God's door
Is that clear band of chrysoprase;
Now the vast temple floor,
The blinding glory of the dome
I bow my head before.
Thy universe, O God, is home,
In height or depth, to me;
Yet here upon thy footstool green
Content am I to be,
Glad when is opened unto my need
Some sea-like glimpse of Thee.

THE LADY ARBELLA.[1]

The good ship Arbella is leading the fleet
Away to the westward, through rain-storm and sleet;
The white cliffs of England have dropped out of sight:
As birds from the warmth of their nest taking flight
Into wider horizons, each fluttering sail
Follows fast where the Mayflower fled on the gale
With her resolute Pilgrims, ten winters before;
And the fire of their faith lights the sea and the shore.

There are yeomen and statesmen, — the learnèd and rude
One brotherhood; jealousy cannot intrude
Between heart and heart; with one purpose they go, —
To knit life to life, a new nation, and grow
In the strength of the Lord. There are maidens discreet,
And saintliest matrons; but none is so sweet
As the delicate blush-rose from Lincoln's old hall,
The Lady Arbella, the flower of them all.

Belovèd and loving, one stands at her side,
A bridegroom well matched with so lovely a bride;

[1] Written for the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the landing of Governor Winthrop at Salem, Massachusetts, June 22d (or O. S. June 12th), 1630.

The Arbella was anchored from Saturday to Monday, inside the islands, just off the shore of Beverly, then called Bass-River-Side; and many of the people went ashore and gathered wild strawberries, — as is recorded by Winthrop in his Journal.

The story of Lady Arbella, daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, and wife of Mr. Isaac Johnson, — the narrative of the long and stormy voyage of Winthrop's fleet to our shores, and her death, followed by that of her husband, within three months after their arrival, are familiar to the readers of our earliest colonial history.

Wise Winthrop is balancing care in his mind
For the colony's weal, for the wife left behind;
And godly and tolerant Phillips is there,
To comfort his shipmates with blessing and prayer:
One and all, they have taken their lives in their hand
To be scattered as seed in a wilderness land.

There is hope in their eyes, though it gleams through regret;
They go not as those who can lightly forget
The Church, their dear mother, the land of their birth,
In the glamour that flushes an unexplored earth,
A limitless continent, fringing the rim
Of the silent sea-vastness with promises dim;
And their love, reaching back from the voyage begun,
Links Old and New England forever as one.

They drift through blank midnight, they toss in the mist,
Blown hither and thither as wild winds may list;
Moons wane, ere a glimpse of the land that they seek
Breaks the chaos of billow and fog: though the cheek
Of Arbella grows pale, with a clear, kindling eye,
She says, "It is well that we go, though we die;"
And the heart of the bridegroom beats high at her side,
In response to the undismayed heart of his bride.

And still, side by side, they keep watch on the deck,
Till the faint shore approaches — an outline — a speck
That wavers and sinks, and arises again,
Undefined, on the outermost verge of the main.
And lo! on a golden June morning, a smell
As of blossoming gardens, borne over the swell
Of the weltering brine; cliff and headland that dip
Their green robes in the sea, leaning out to the ship!

And shining above them, afar on the sky,
Where the coast-line trends inland, the snow-summits high,
A glimmer of crystal! The lady's rapt gaze
Lingers long on that wonder of filmy white haze,
As a vision of mountains celestial, that rise
On the soul of the dying, who nears Paradise.
Did she know, could she dream, that to her it was given
But to touch at this new world, and pass on to heaven?

There looms Agamenticus, beckons Cape Ann;
There a smoke-wreath reveals Masconomo's red clan,
Or the camp-fire of settlers; and here a canoe,
Here a shallop, steers out to the storm-beaten crew.
The low islands part, as an opening door,
And they glide in, and anchor in sight of the shore,
Where the wild roses' fragrance, the strawberries' scent,
With the music of song-bird and billow is blent.

Did the Lady Arbella's light foot touch the beach?
Did the sweet-brier sway to her laugh and her speech?
Waves wash away foot-prints; winds sweep from the air
Glad echoes, fresh odors; — her memory is there!
And the wild rose is sweeter on Bass-River-Side
For breathing where once breathed the sweet English bride;
And the moan of the surges a pathos has caught
From her presence there, brief as the flight of a thought.

Grave Endicott welcomes his beautiful guest:
At last in the wilderness shall she find rest,
And dream of the cities to rise at her feet
In a nation where mercy and righteousness meet?
Dear Lady Arbella! so brave and so meek!
Too fragile a flower for this atmosphere bleak,
When the rose shed its petals on Bass-River-Side,
The blush-rose of Lincoln had faded and died.

But a soul cannot fail of its gracious intent;
We are known, and we live, through the good that we meant.
The seed will spring up that was watered with tears;
If an angel looked on, through those first dreary years
Of the colony's childhood, and bore up its prayer,
The spirit of Lady Arbella was there;
And to whatever Eden her footsteps have flown,
New England still claims her — forever our own!

For the lady arose to her womanhood then,
When gentry and yeomanry simply were men
In communion of hardship. All honor be theirs
Whose names on her forehead the Commonwealth wears,
Who planted the roots of our freedom! Nor yet
The blossoms that died in transplanting forget, —
The true-hearted women who perished beside
The Lady Arbella, the fair English bride!

SWEET-BRIER.

Rose, with a fragrance diffused,
Of crushed gums and spicery bruised,
Through petal and stem and leaf, —
Thou art as the presence of one
Through deep glens of Paradise gone,
Far beyond reach of my grief.

Thy soft lamp illumines the dell,
The gray granite smiles in thy spell,
Pink torch of the pasture's brown gloom!
Thy lithe boughs, that gracefully sway,
Thy delicate odors, to-day
Restore me her womanly bloom.

Wild buds awoke under her hand;
Rare blossoms would rise and expand
In the heaven of her eyes' blessed blue;
And her heart and her being were flowers
That lit up the desolate hours,
And, storm-beaten, lovelier grew.

Spirit, that madest earth sweet,
Across barren hillsides my feet
Go seeking thee, missing thee still;
Yet thy love in my life doth remain,
A memory that pierces to pain —
A perfume, a pathos, a thrill.

If a blossom from heaven could lean,
A rose-flush, a glory of green
Trailing over the blank wall of death,
I think it would bring back to me
A waft of fresh woodlands and thee, —
Sweet-Brier, her soul in thy breath!

MISTRESS HALE OF BEVERLY.[1]

THE roadside forests here and there were touched with tawny gold;
The days were shortening, and at dusk the sea looked blue and cold;
Through his long fields the minister paced, restless, up and down;
Before, the land-locked harbor lay; behind, the little town.

No careless chant of harvester or fisherman awoke
The silent air; no clanging hoof, no curling weft of smoke,
Where late the blacksmith's anvil rang; all dumb as death, — and why?
Why? echoed back the minister's chilled heart, for sole reply.

His wife was watching from the door; she came to meet him now,
A weary sadness in her voice, a care upon her brow.
A vague, oppressive mystery, a hint of unknown fear,
Hung hovering over every roof: it was the witchcraft year.

She laid her hand upon his arm, and looked into his face,
And as he turned away she turned, beside him keeping pace:

[1] "What finally broke the spell by which they had held the minds of the whole colony in bondage was their accusation, in October, of Mrs. Hale, the wife of the minister of the First Church of Beverly. Her genuine and distinguished virtues had won for her a reputation, and secured in the breasts of the people a confidence which superstition itself could not sully nor shake. Mr. Hale had been active in all the previous proceedings; but he knew the innocence and piety of his wife, and he stood forth between her and the storm he had helped to raise. The whole community became convinced that the accusers in crying out upon Mrs. Hale had perjured themselves; and from that moment their power was destroyed." — UPHAM'S *Salem Witchcraft.*

And, "Oh, my husband, let me speak!" said gentle Mistress Hale,
"For truth is fallen in the street, and falsehoods vile prevail.

"The very air we breathe is thick with whisperings of hell;
The foolish trust the quaking bog, where wise men sink as well,
Who follow them: O husband mine, for love of me, beware
Of touching slime that from the pit is oozing everywhere!

"The rulers and the ministers, tell me, what have they done,
Through all the dreadful weeks since this dark inquest was begun,
Save to encourage thoughtless girls in their unhallowed ways,
And bring to an untimely end many a good woman's days?

"Think of our neighbor, Goodwife Hoar: because she would not say
She was in league with evil powers, she pines in jail to-day.
Think of our trusty field-hand, Job, — a swaggerer, it is true, —
Boasting he feared no Devil, they have condemned him, too.

"And Bridget Bishop, when she lived yonder at Ryal-Side,
What if she kept a shovel-board, and trimmed with laces wide
Her scarlet bodice: grant she was too frivolous and vain;
How dared they take away the life they could not give again?

"Nor soberness availeth aught; for who hath suffered worse,
Through persecutions undeserved, than good Rebecca Nurse?
Forsaken of her kith and kin, alone in her despair,
It almost seemed as if God's ear were closed against her prayer.

"They spare not even infancy: poor little Dorcas Good,
The vagrant's child — but four years old! — who says that baby could
To Satan sign her soul away condemns this business blind,
As but the senseless babbling of a weak and wicked mind.

"Is it not like the ancient tale they tell of Phaeton,
Whose ignorant hands were trusted with the horses of the sun?
Our teachers now by witless youths are led on and beguiled:
Woe to the land, the Scripture saith, whose ruler is a child!

"God grant this dismal day be short! Except help soon arrive,
To ruin these deluded ones will our fair country drive.
If I to-morrow were accused, what further could I plead
Than those who died, whom neither judge nor minister would heed?

"I pray thee, husband, enter not their councils any more!
My heart aches with forebodings! Do not leave me, I implore!
Yet if to turn this curse aside my life might but avail,
In Christ's name would I yield it up;" said gentle Mistress Hale.

The minister of Beverly dreamed a strange dream that night:
He dreamed the tide came up, blood-red, through inlet, cove, and bight,

Till Salem Village was submerged; until Bass River rose,
A threatening crimson gulf, that yawned the hamlet to inclose.

It rushed in at the cottage-doors whence women fled and wept;
Close to the little meeting-house with serpent curves it crept;
The grave-mounds in the burying-ground were sunk beneath its flood;
The doorstone of the parsonage was dashed with spray of blood.

And on the threshold, praying, knelt his dear and honored wife,
As one who would that deluge stay at cost of her own life. —
"Oh, save her! save us, Christ!" the cry unlocked him from his dream,
And at his casement in the east he saw the day-star gleam.

The minister that morning said, "Only this once I go,
Beloved wife; I cannot tell if witches be or no.
We on the judgment-throne have sat in place of God too long;
I fear me much lest we have done His flock a grievous wrong:

"And this before my brethren will I testify to-day."
Around him quiet wooded isles and placid waters lay,
As unto Salem-Side he crossed. He reached the court-room small,
Just as a shrill, unearthly shriek echoed from wall to wall:

"Woe! Mistress Hale tormenteth me! She came in like a bird,
Perched on her husband's shoulder!" Then silence fell; no word
Spake either judge or minister, while with profound amaze
Each fixed upon the other's face his horror-stricken gaze.

But, while the accuser writhed in wild contortions on the floor,
One rose and said, "Let all withdraw! the court is closed!" no more:
For well the land knew Mistress Hale's rare loveliness and worth;
Her virtues bloomed like flowers of heaven along the paths of earth.

The minister of Beverly went homeward riding fast;
His wife shrank back from his strange look, affrighted and aghast.
"Dear wife, thou ailest! Shut thyself into thy room!" said he;
"Whoever comes, the latch-string keep drawn in from all save me!"

Nor his life's treasure from close guard did he one moment lose,
Until across the ferry came a messenger with news
That the bewitched ones acted now vain mummeries of woe;
The judges looked and wondered still, but all the accused let go.

The dark cloud rolled from off the land; the golden leaves dropped down
Along the winding wood-paths of the little sea-side town:
In Salem Village there was peace; with witchcraft-trials passed
The nightmare-terror from the vexed New England air at last.

Again in natural tones men dared to laugh aloud and speak;
From Naugus Head the fisher's shout rang back to Jeffrey's Creek;

The phantom-soldiery withdrew, that haunted Gloucester shore;
The teamster's voice through Wenham Woods broke into psalms
once more.

The minister of Beverly thereafter sorely grieved
That he had inquisition held with counselors deceived;
Forsaking love's unerring light and duty's solid ground,
And groping in the shadowy void, where truth is never found.

Errors are almost trespasses; rarely indeed we know
How our mistakes hurt other hearts, until some random blow
Has well-nigh broken our own. Alas! regret could not restore
To lonely hearths the presences that gladdened them before.

As with the grain our fathers sowed sprang up Old England's
weeds,
So to their lofty piety clung superstition's seeds.
Though tares grow with it, wheat is wheat: by food from heaven
we live:
Yet whoso asks for daily bread must add, "Our sins forgive!"

Truth made transparent in a life, tried gold of character,
Were Mistress Hale's, and this is all that history says of her;
Their simple force, like sunlight, broke the hideous midnight spell,
And sight restored again to eyes obscured by films of hell.

The minister's long fields are still with dews of summer wet:
The roof that sheltered Mistress Hale tradition points to yet.
Green be her memory ever kept all over Cape-Ann-Side,
Whose unobtrusive excellence awed back delusion's tide!

SYLVIA.

"Sylvia!" The happy face looked up,
With love's unvoiced reply;
Beneath his, deep light brimmed her eye,
As a blue blossom fills its cup
From fullness of the sky.

Sylvia! It was her wedding-day;
Her story seemed complete:
No voice had made her name so sweet
Along the rustic maiden's way,
So rhythmic to repeat.

The sylvan, quaint, romantic name
Had drifted to her door
From the Atlantic's eastern shore,
Where some ancestral English dame
Its style Arcadian wore.

But here it breathed of rose and fern,
And salt winds of Cape Ann;
Of timid wild-flowers hid from man
Behind the gray cliffs' barrier stern,
In woods where shy streams ran.

And they twain wandered in a wood
By vague sea-whisperings swept;
To soul, through sense, fine odors crept;
Within the northern air the mood
Of tropic sunshine slept.

'Mid sassafras and wintergreen,
Elder and meadow-rue,
In dazzling bridal-raiment new,
Glorious in exile as a queen,
The white magnolia grew.

"Sylvia! my own magnolia flower!"
The proud young husband said:
With creamy buds he crowned her head;
And Sylvia smiled, and blessed the hour
Of summer she was wed.

The years went on, and Sylvia grew
Pale at her work, and thin.
The pair no green woods wandered in;
Cold through the corn the north-wind blew;
Their bread was hard to win.

Furrowed his brow became, and stern,
As his own farm-lands rough.
He called her "Wife!" in accents gruff.
Why should she for her girl-name yearn?
Was she not his? Enough.

Enough! — enough to fill the bound
Of woman's heart is he
Who leaves no heaven-growth in her free,
Who guards not for her what he found
Her life of life to be?

The tired wife's woodland name to her
Gospels of freedom meant,
And he with every dream was blent:
His "Sylvia!" in her soul could stir
Long ripples of content.

But now for dreary weeks and years
Her name he never spoke.
Into no storm her dull dawns broke;
Life was not sad enough for tears;
Her heart more slowly broke.

Sometimes, deep in an oaken chest
With ample linen filled,
The touch of a dead blossom thrilled
Into blind pain sweet thoughts repressed,
And in long silence chilled:

Again the rich magnolia breathed
Through the New England air
Its hint of Southern summers rare;
Again her head the warm buds wreathed;
Her bridegroom twined them there.

She shut the chest: she would not think
Her life the dry pressed flower
She knew it was. Yet hour on hour
More stifling grew; and lock and link
Crushed down with steadier power.

He boasted of her skillful hands,
Her quick, unresting feet:
"No woman like my wife I meet:
On all the Cape none understands
How to make home so neat."

She, proud to be her husband's pride,
For bread received a stone.
Love lives not on such bread alone;
And hungry longings woke and cried
For better things unknown.

Only by toil the wife could keep
Her girl-heart's clamor down.
Care's ashes all her tresses brown
Sprinkled with gray. An early sleep
Came death, life's ache to drown.

When, by the blank around, he knew
What she had been to him,
And, in remorseful guesses dim,
Measured the joy she failed of, too,
Thought bittered to its brim.

He sought the sea-washed woods, where tall
Black pines at noon made night;
The flowers stood still in lovely light:
He seemed to hear his dead bride call
From every blossom white.

The warm-breathed, fresh magnolia-bloom
In hands that never stirred
He laid, with one beseeching word, —
"Sylvia!" — that pierced death's gathering gloom.
Her soul smiled back: she heard!

FLOWER OF GRASS.

THE gracefulness that homely life takes on
When love is at its root, you saw in her;
No color, but soft tints in lovely blur;
A charm which, if so much as named, was gone,
Like light out of a passing cloud. Yet when
The fairer faces bloomed on you alone,
Without the softening of her presence, then
Into their look had something garish grown;
Some tenderness had faded from the air, —
A loss so subtle and so undefined
The thought was blamed that hinted loss was there.
The nature of such souls is to be blind
To self and to self-seeking: let them blend
Their life as harmony and atmosphere
With other lives — let them but have a friend
Whose merit they may set off or endear,
And they are gladder than in any guess
Or dream of their own separate happiness.
Earth were not sweet without such souls as hers:
Even of the rose and lily might we tire;
She was the flower of grass, that only stirs
To soothe the air, and nothing doth require
But to forget itself in doing good; —
One of life's lowly, saintly multitude.

MEHETABEL.

MEHETABEL'S knitting lies loose in her hand;
She watches the gold of a broken red brand
That glitters and flashes,
And falls into ashes:
The flame that illumines her face
From the cavernous, black fire-place
Brings ever new wonders of color and shade
To flicker about her, and shimmer and fade.
Does any one guess
Of this maid's loveliness,
That the lonesome and smoky old room seems to bless?

Mehetabel's mother calls out of the gloom,
From a clatter of shovel and kettle and broom,
From her flurry and worry
Of work-a-day hurry:
"Our Hetty sits there in a dream,
With her needles half round to the seam,

With nothing to vex her, and nothing to try her;
But never will she set the river afire."
And back to the din
Of iron and tin
One shadow flits out, while another steals in.

Mehetabel's lover through new-fallen snow
So softly has come that the maid does not know
He is standing behind her,
So happy to find her
Alone, that he hardly can speak:
A whisper, — a flush on her cheek
More lovely than sunset's reflection, by far!
"Oh, Hetty," he murmurs, "the white evening star
And the beacon-lights swim
On the ocean's blue rim,
But I see your sweet eyes, and they make the stars dim."

Mehetabel's wooer is stalwart and tall;
His figure looms dark on the flame-lighted wall.
Outside in pale shadow
Lie pasture and meadow;
Dim roselight is on the white hill;
The sea glimmers purple and chill: —
"Oh, Hetty, be mine for the calm and the storm!
Though cold be the wide world, my heart's love is warm;
Knit me into your dream,
And my rude life will seem
Like a beautiful landscape in June's golden beam!"

Mehetabel's forehead has gathered a cloud,
A thousand new thoughts to her young bosom crowd;
Her knitting drops lower;
No lover can show her
The way through her mind's tangled maze.
He reads no response in her gaze:
Her heart is a snow-drift where foot never trod;
Love's sun has not wakened a bud on its sod;
And pure as the glow
Of the stars on the snow
Are the glances that up through her long lashes go.

Mehetabel's future, an unexplored land,
Spreads vaguely before her, unpeopled and grand:
Its wild paths wait lonely
For her footsteps only;
She must weave out the web of her dream,
Though flimsy and worthless it seem
To her mother's eye, filled with the dust-motes of care;
Though it bar up her path from the heart that beats there
In the rich, ruddy gloom,
Breathing odor and bloom,
And sweet sense of life through the dusk of the room.

Mehetabel's dream — you will guess it in vain;
Only half to herself is unwound the bright skein.
She is but a woman,
As gentle as human,
Yet rooted in hearts fresh as hers
Is the hope that the universe stirs;
And broad be her thought as life's measureless zone,
Or narrow as self is, it still is her own;
And alone she may dare
What she never would share
With friendship the dearest, or love the most rare.

Mehetabel's answer — it has not been told.
To ashes has fallen the firelight's red gold.
No mother, no lover,
For her, the world over!
The work-a-day jangle is still.
An empty house stands on the hill:
The rafters are cobwebbed, the ceiling is bare,
But always a wraith haunts the carved oaken chair:
And early and late
There 's a creak at the gate,
And a wind through the room, with a soft sigh of "Wait!"

Mehetabel — Hetty — the dream of a dream,
The film of a snow-cloud, a star's broken beam,
Were a tangible story
To hers; but the glory
Of ages dims down to a spark,
And dies out at last in the dark,
Among questions unanswered, unrealized dreams:
Still the beautiful cheat of what may be and seems,
Flashes up on night's brink,
When the live embers blink,
And the tales that they mutter we dream that we think.

FERN-LIFE.

Yes, life! though it seems half a death,
When the flowers of the glen
Bend over, with color and breath,
Till we tremble again;

Till we shudder with exquisite pain
Their beauty to see,
While our dumb hope, through fibre and vein,
Climbs up to be free.

No blossom — scarce leaf — on the ground,
Vague fruitage we bear, —

Point upward, reach fingers around,
In a tender despair.

And we pencil rare patterns of grace
Men's footsteps about:
A charm in our wilderness-place
They find us, no doubt.

Yet why must this possible more
Forever be less?
The unattained flower in the spore
Hints a human distress.

We fern-folk with grave whispers crowd
The solemn wood-gloom,
Or weave over clods our green cloud
Of nebulous bloom.

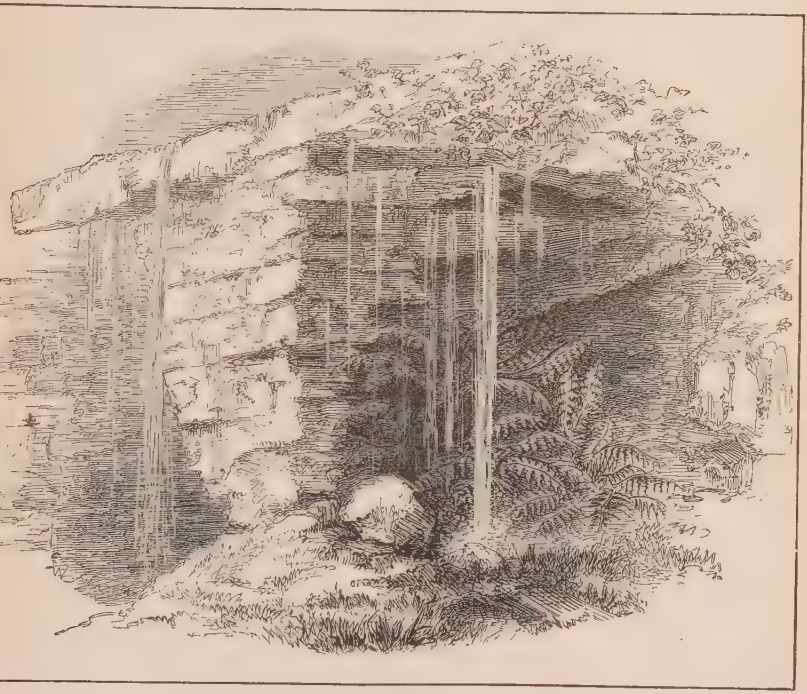
To fashion our life as a flower,
In weird curves we reach, —
O man, with your beautiful power
Of presence and speech!

Yet the heart of the human must grope
Through its nobler despair;
For it can but look upward, and hope
All perfection to share.

And to dream of the sweetness we miss
Is not wholly in vain;
For the soul can be glad in a bliss
It may never attain.

PHEBE.

Phebe, idle Phebe,
On the door-step in the sun,
Drops the ripe-red currants
Through her fingers, one by one.
Heedless of her pleasant work,
Rebel murmurs rise and lurk
In the dimples of her mouth;
Winds come perfumed from the South;
Musical with swarms of bees
Are the overhanging trees:
Phebe does not care
If the world is fair.
"Phebe! Phebe!"
It was but a wandering bird
That pronounced the word.



FERN LIFE. Page 212.

Phebe, listless Phebe,
Leaves the currants on the stem,
Saying, "Since he comes not,
Labor's lost in picking them:"
Loiters down the alleys green
Crowds of blushing pinks between,
Followed by a breeze that goes
Whispering secrets of the rose.
Does that saucy bird's keen eye
Read her heart, as he flits by?
Syllables that mock
Haunt the garden-walk:
"Phebe! Phebe!"
Lilac-thickets hid among,
His refrain is sung.

Phebe, wistful Phebe,
Leans upon the mossy wall:
Nothing stirs the stillness
Save a trickling brooklet's fall.
Phebe's eyes, against her will,
Seek the village on the hill.—
"If he knew he had the power
So to chill and change the hour,—
Knew the pain to me it is
His approaching step to miss,—
Knew the blank, the ache,
His neglect can make,"—
"Phebe! Phebe!"
From a neighboring forest-roof
Echoed the reproof.

Phebe, troubled Phebe,
With the brook still murmurs on:
"If he knew how sunshine
Pales and thins when he is gone,—
Knew that I, who seem so cold,
Lock up tenderness untold—
As the full midsummer glow
Hides its live roots under snow—
In my heart's warm silence deep,
And for him that hoard must keep
Till he brings the key,
Would he scoff at me?"
"Phebe! Phebe!"
The receding singer's throat
Shaped a warning note.

"Phebe, darling Phebe!"
Like a startled fawn she turns:
Over cheek and forehead
Swift the rising rose-flush burns.

"Sweetheart, if you only knew
That my life's one dream is — you!"
"Hence, eavesdropper!" though she cried,
Gentle eyes her lips belied.
Lost in foolish lover-chat,
Picking currants they two sat,
Till a woodland bird
Sent his good-night word,
"Phebe! Phebe!"
In faint mockery, as he fled
Through the evening-red.

IN THE AIR.

THE scent of a blossom from Eden!
The flower was not given to me,
But it freshened my spirit forever,
As it passed, on its way to thee!

In my soul is a lingering music:
The song was not meant for me,
But I listen, and listen, and wonder
To whom it can lovelier be.

The sounds and the scents that float by us —
They cannot tell whither they go;
Yet, however it fails of its errand,
Love makes the world sweeter, I know.

I know that love never is wasted,
Nor truth, nor the breath of a prayer;
And the thought that goes forth as a blessing
Must live, as a joy in the air.

BESSIE AND RUTH.

ABOVE them the meadow-lark's call
Rose, piercing the tremulous ether,
As they clambered across the stone wall,
And came through the lane together.
Two girls, in their gowns of blue,
With their milking-pails, came through
Red waves of the wind-shaken clover:
And the bloom of the grass dropped dew,
And the dawn into sunrise grew,
As they loitered talking it over, —
Talking a love-secret over.

Their secret; they thought it was hid,
  But the wren and the bob-o'-link knew it;
And a wood-thrush, the alders amid,
  To his mate in a flute-echo threw it.
    They talked of two lads on the sea;
    They talked of two weddings to be;
And a rose-colored future each wove her;
    Two hearts that were fettered, yet free;
    In the shade of a green-golden tree
As they lingered, talking it over, —
      Talking the old story over.

They climbed the bleak slopes of a cliff
  Made warm by the footsteps of summer;
And each asked the solemn waves if
  They had heard of a laggard home-comer.
    Mist-flushed with the heats of July,
    The white, silent vessels went by,
But neither saw sign of her rover:
    And the deeps of Ruth's dreamy blue eye
    Were ruffled by Bessie's long sigh,
While the slow waves murmured it over, —
      Murmured the mystery over.

They parted at dusk on the beach;
  The third moon of harvest was waning:
A yearning was in their low speech,
  As of billow to billow complaining.
    To Bessie the deep faith of Ruth
    Lapsed sad as the ebb-tide of youth;
And the stars in the sky-gulf above her
    Sank chill as her dumb thoughts, in sooth;
    For she doubted her own maiden-truth,
Dreaming another love over, —
      Wondering, dreaming it over.

The lark's note pierced heaven again;
  And again, in the June-lighted weather,
The footsteps of two in the lane,
  Kept time to a love-tune together.
    The gossip of bluebird and thrush
    Slid lightly from tree-top to bush,
And shook with faint laughter the clover;
    And the sweet-brier bent with a blush
    That warned the pert blackbird to hush,
While Bessie went by with her lover,
      Talking her second love over.

Ruth came through the brown fields alone
  To the sea, veiled in gray of November:
Dead leaves rustled past; with a moan
  Strove the wind to revive autumn's ember.

But the youth-light shone on in her eye,
And a joy in her heart, sweet and high,
Sang clearer than curlew or plover.
There is hope that is never put by!
There is love that refuses to die!
And the old sea this burden croons over
Forever, over and over!

GOLDEN DAISIES.

Disk of bronze and ray of gold
Glimmering through the meadow grasses,
Burn less proudly! for, behold,
Down the field my princess passes.
Hardly should I hold you fair,
Golden, gay, midsummer daisies,
But for her, the maiden rare,
Who, amid your starry mazes,
Makes you splendid with her praises.

Soft brown tresses, eyes of blue,
Is a heart beneath you waking?
Maiden, here 's a heart for you,
Fain were worthier of your taking.
Golden daisies, you have met
In a fairy ring around her:
Does she hear my footfall yet,
Where, enchanted, you have bound her?
Hold her charmed, till we have crowned her!

Softly, blossoms, while she stands
In the sunny stillness dreaming;
Softly hither, to my hands—
Wreathe for her a circlet gleaming!—
Lights her face a shy, swift smile;
Flower-like head she slowly raises:—
Was her heart mine, all the while?
Blossoms, royal with her praises,
Crown my queen, ye golden daisies!

BARBERRYING.

Years ago, years ago,
Years that seem to me like days,
Through the Indian summer haze,
Barberrying, barberrying,
I went once with sisters three,
Faith, and Hope, and Charity.

Country girls, neighbors mine,
From the red house by the mill;
Through the lane, across the hill,
Barberrying, barberrying,
Up the steep woods by the sea,
We went rambling pleasantly.

Winding on, climbing on,
Wandered Hope through brake and bush;
Faith's low singing charmed the hush;
Barberrying, barberrying,
Under oak and maple tree,
Still and sweet walked Charity.

Gay were Hope's starry eyes
As the sparkling Pleiads seven;
Faith's were blue as bluest heaven;
Barberrying, barberrying,
As we walked, I could not see
Downcast orbs of Charity.

Up the hill, far we strayed;
Thickets of the red fruit glowed,
Veiling gracefully the road;
Barberrying, barberrying,
Over loose walls clambered we,
Happy as we well could be.

Apron-full, baskets-full,
Gathered Charity and I;
Faith and Hope went laughing by,
Barberrying, barberrying;
While beneath a reddening tree,
We sat resting silently.

Golden-rod, asters dim,
Lit the steps of Faith and Hope
Up the pathless rocky slope;
Barberrying, barberrying,
Glimpses of the far-off sea
Came to Charity and me.

Up the hill, o'er the hill,
Like two blown leaves of a flower,
Fluttered they, a light half hour,
Barberrying, barberrying:
Said I, "Climb life's hill with me;
Climb and rest, sweet Charity!"

Did they move, parted lips,
Red as ripest of our spoil?
Since that day of mirth and toil,

Barberrying, barberrying,
Dearest of the sisters three,
Charity abides with me.

A GAMBREL ROOF.

How pleasant! This old house looks down
Upon a shady little town,
Whose great good luck has been to stay
Just outside of the modern way
Of tiresome strut and show;
The elm-trees overhead have seen
Two hundred new-born summers green
Up to their tops for sunshine climb;
And, since the old colonial time,
The road has wound just so:

This way through Salem Village; that,
Along the Plains (the place is flat,
And names itself so); toward the tide
Of sea-fed creeks, past Ryal-Side,
And round by Folly Hill,
Whose sunken cellar now is all
Memorial of a stately hall
Where yule-logs roared and red wine flowed;
From its lost garden to the road
A gold bloom trickles still:

Woad-waxen gold — a foreign weed,
Spoiling the fields for useful seed,
Yet something to recall the day
When we were under royal sway,
And paid our taxes well.
And from that memory, as a thread,
The shuttle of my rhyme is fed;
Upon this ancient gambrel roof
The warp was spun; behold the woof,
And all there is to tell.

About a hundred years ago,
When Danvers roadsides were aglow
With cardinal flowers and golden-rod;
Months ere in Lexington the sod
Was dewed with soldiers' blood;
Though warlike rumors filled the air,
And red coats loitered here and there,
Eye-sores to every yeoman free;
When from the White Hills to the sea
Swelled Revolution's bud;

In this old house, even then not new,
A Continental Colonel true
Dwelt, with a blithe and willful wife,
The sparkle on his cup of life;
A man of sober mood,
He felt the strife before it came,
Within him, like a welding flame,
That nerve and sinew changed to steel,
And, at the opening cannon peal,
Ready for fight he stood.

Cheap was the draught, beyond a doubt,
The mother country served us out;
And many a housewife raised a wail,
Hearing of fragrant chest and bale
To thirstless mermaids poured.
And Mistress Audrey's case was hard,
When her tall Colonel down the yard
Called, "Wife, be sure you drink no tea!"
For best Imperial, prime Bohea,
Were in her cupboard stored;

Young Hyson, too, the finest brand;
And here the good wife made a stand:
"Now, Colonel, well enough you know
Our tea was paid for long ago,
Before this cargo came,
With threepence duty on the pound;
It won't be wasted, I 'll be bound!
I 've asked a friend or two to sup,
And not to offer them a cup
Would be a stingy shame."

Into his face the quick blood flew:
"Wife, I have promised, so must you,
None shall drink tea inside my house;
Your gossips elsewhere must carouse."—
The lady curtsied low:
"Husband, your word is law;" she said,
But archly turned her well-set head
With roguish poise toward this old roof,
Soon as she heard his martial hoof
Along the highway go.

"Late dusk will fall ere he comes back:
Quick, Dill!" Whereat a figure black,
A strange, grotesque, swift shadow made
Between the silent elm-trees' shade,
Where all was grass and sun:
Then maid and mistress passed within
The pantry, hung with glittering tin,

Tiptoeing every sanded floor,
Till, at the china-closet door,
They saw their work begun.

The egg-shell porcelain, crystal-fine,
Was polished to its utmost shine;
The silver teaspoons gleamed as bright,
Upon the damask napkin white;
And many a knowing smile
Flashed from the fair face to the black,
Across the kitchen chimney-back,
While syllabubs and custards grew
To comely shape betwixt the two;
And cakes, a toothsome pile.

But lightly dined the dame that day:
Her guests, in Sunday-best array,
Came, and not one arrived too soon,
In the first slant of afternoon.
An hour or two they sat,
In the low-studded western room,
Where hollyhocks threw rosy bloom
On sampler framed, and quaint Dutch tile.
They knit; they sewed long seams; the while
Chatting of this and that; —

Of horrors scarcely died away
From memory of the heads grown gray
On neighboring farms: how wizard John
And Indian Tituba went on,
When sorcerers were believed;
How Parson Parris tried to make
Poor Mary Sibley's conjuring cake
The leaven of that black witchcraft curse,
That grew and spread, from bad to worse,
And even the elect deceived;

Of apparitions at Cape Ann,
And spectral fights — the story ran;
Of pirate gold in Saugus' caves;
Sea-serpents off Nahant, the waves
Lashing with fearsome trail;
Of armies flashing in the air
Auroral swords, prefiguring there
Some dreadful conflict, bloodshed, death: —
And needles stopped, and well-nigh breath,
As eerier grew the tale.

Dame Audrey said: "The sun gets low;
Good neighbors mine, before you go,
Come to the house-top, pray, with me!
A goodly prospect you shall see,
I promise, spread around.

If we must part ere day decline,
And if no hospitable sign
Appear, of China's cheering drink,
Not niggardly your hostess think!
We all are patriots sound."

They followed her with puzzled air;
But saw, upon the topmost stair,
Out on the railed roof, dark-faced Dill
Guarding the supper-board, as still
As solid ebony.
"A goodly prospect, as I said,
You here may see before you spread:
Upon a house is not *within* it;
But now we must not waste a minute;
Neighbors, sit down to tea!"

How Madam then her ruse explained,
What mirth arose as sunset waned,
In the close covert of these trees,
No leaf told the reporter breeze;
But when the twilight fell,
And hoof-beats rang down Salem road,
And up the yard the Colonel strode,
No soul beside the dame and Dill
Stirred in the mansion dim and still:
The game was played out well.

Let whoso chooses settle blame
Betwixt the Colonel and his dame,
Or dame and country. That the view
Is from this housetop fine, is true,
And needs but visual proof:
And if a woman's will found way
Years since, up here, its pranks to play,
Under Mansards the sport goes on. —
Moral of all here said or done:
I like a gambrel roof.

GOODY GRUNSELL'S HOUSE.

A WEARY old face, beneath a black mutch;
Like a flame in a cavern her eye,
Betwixt craggy forehead and cheek-bone high;
Her long, lean fingers hurried to clutch
A something concealed in her rusty cloak,
As a step on the turf the stillness broke,
While a sound — was it curse or sigh?
Smote the ear of the passer-by.

A dreary old house, on a headland slope,
  Against the gray of the sea:
  Where garden and orchard used to be,
Witch-grass and nettle and rag-weed grope, —
Paupers that eat the earth's riches out, —
Nightshade and henbane are lurking about,
  Like demons that enter in
  When a soul has run waste to sin.

The house looked wretched and woe-begone;
  Its desolate windows wept
With a dew that forever dripped and crept
From the moss-grown eaves; and ever anon
Some idle wind, with a passing slap,
Made rickety shutter or shingle flap,
  As who with a jeer should say,
  "Why does the old crone stay?"

Goody Grunsell's house, — it was all her own;
  There was no one living to chide,
Though she tore every rib from its skeleton side
To kindle a fire when she sat alone
With the ghosts that had leave to go out and in,
Through crevice and rent, to the endless din
  Of winds that muttered and moaned,
  Of waves that wild ditties droned.

And this was the only booty she hid
  Under her threadbare cloak, —
A strip of worn and weather-stained oak:
Then in to her lonesome hearth she slid;
And, inch by inch, as the cold years sped,
She was burning the old house over her head;
  Why not, when each separate room
  Held more than a lifetime's gloom?

Goody Grunsell's house, — not a memory glad
  Illumined bare ceiling or wall;
But cruel shadows would sometimes fall
On the floor, and faces eerie and sad
At dusk would peer in at the broken pane,
While ghostly steps pattered through the rain,
  Sending the blood with a start
  To her empty, shriveled heart.

For she had not been a forbearing wife,
  Nor a loyal husband's mate;
The twain had been one but in fear and hate;
And the horror of that inverted life
Had not spent itself on their souls alone:
From the bitter root evil buds had blown;
  There were births that blighted grew,
  And died, and no gladness knew.

The house unto nobody home had been,
But a lair of pain and shame:
Could any its withered mistress blame,
Who sought from its embers a spark to win,
A warmth for the body, to soul refused?
Such questioning ran through her thoughts confused,
As she slipped with her spoil from sight: —
Could the dead assert their right?

The splintered board, like a dagger's blade,
Goody Grunsell cowering hid,
As if the house had a voice that chid,
When wound after wound in its side she made;
As if the wraiths of her children cried
From their graves, to denounce her a homicide;
While the sea, up the weedy path,
Groaned, spuming in wordless wrath.

The house, with its pitiful, haunted look, —
Old Goody, more piteous still,
Angry and sad, as the night fell chill, —
They are pictures out of a long-lost book:
But the windows of many a human face
Show tenants that burn their own dwelling-place;
And spectre and fiend will roam
Through the heart which is not love's home.

THE FOG-BELL.

The vessels are sunk in the mist;
And hist!
Through the veil of the air
Throbs a sound,
Like a wail of despair,
That dies into stillness profound.

All muffled in gray is the sea;
Not a tree
Sees its neighbor beside
Or before;
And across the blank tide,
Hark! that sob of an echo once more!

'T is the fog-bell's imploring, wild knell!
It is well
For the sailors who hear;
But its toll
Thrills the night with a fear: —
To what doom drifts the rudderless soul!

OLD MADELINE.

Over a crumpled paper in her hand
Old Madeline wept.
Dimly the candle flickered on the stand;
Up the dark chimney flared a smouldering brand;
The whole house slept.

And Madeline's care had made that sleeping sweet;
For all day long
She pattered to and fro with light, quick feet;
And while her broom made nook and corner neat,
She hummed a song:

A broken singing, thin and pitiful,
And yet in tune
With all that makes great lyrics musical:
It stopped the children, hurrying out of school,
At night or noon.

Now a quaint hymn; now "Jamie on the sea;"
An anthem snatch
That sung in far Thanksgivings used to be,
In savage days before the land was free;
A glee or catch;

No matter what, — the children gathered near,
For all and each: —
Pathos of moaning winds through branches sere,
Mirth as of waves that break in sunset clear
On some lone beach.

To-night she sat in silence. Every night,
For years and years,
Here had she cowered by the late candle-light
Over the worn-out print, and blurred her sight,
Reading through tears.

To one name, written on the list of "Dead,"
Her tired eyes grew.
Fallen in the march, pursuing foes that fled,
Somewhere beside the road he lay, they said;
His grave none knew.

The tattered newspaper spread out to her
A picture wide:
Among vast alien hills the battle's stir;
A death-bed where none came to minister
To him who died;

A spot of green beside a mountain road,
By warm winds kissed,
Where strange large roses opened hearts that glowed,
And over him their blood-red petals strewed
Whom love had missed.

For sweet maid Madeline had never guessed
Ralph cared for her
Save as a friend; while vainly he sought rest,
Sure that no tender feeling in her breast
For him would stir.

And still his image buried she within,
Beneath her thought,
Wondering what happier girl his heart would win.
She drowned her vexing dreams in work-day din;
The war he sought.

And after he had fallen, a comrade came,
And told her how
Upon the battle-eve he breathed her name;
Then Madeline said, "None else my hand shall claim,"
And kept her vow.

With her no lightest wooing ever sped:
No man might press
A soothing hand upon her weary head,
Or whisper comfort to the heart that bled
With loneliness.

For Madeline said, "Ralph surely waits for me
Beyond Death's gate;
And I might miss him through eternity,
By joining fates with one less loved than he:
I too can wait.

"I could not bear another lover's kiss,
Because I feel
That somewhere, from the heights of heavenly bliss,
His spirit hither yearns, as mine to his,
Forever leal."

This to her silent heart alone she said,
Hushing its moan,
That yet into her merriest singing strayed;
While all declared, "A cheerfuller old maid
Was never known."

Nor ever was there. As her poor song worth
And witchery stole
From muffled minors, in them had its birth,
Out of crushed joy sprang kindliness and mirth;
Her life was whole:

Whole, though it seemed a fragment, rent apart
From its true end.
Downward from deathless clinging reached her heart,
Readier to comfort for its hidden smart;
To all a friend.

None saw her tears save God and her lost love:
Surely that dew
Kept memory blossoming fresh in fields above;
Against death's bars he must have felt the dove
That fluttering flew.

So lived she faithful, an unwedded bride.
His hand of snow
Age laid in blessing on her head. She died.
Do Ralph and Madeline now walk side by side?
The angels know.

THEY SAID.

THEY said of her, "She never can have felt
The sorrows that our deeper natures feel:"
They said, "Her placid lips have never spelt
Hard lessons taught by Pain; her eyes reveal
No passionate yearning, no perplexed appeal
To other eyes. Life and her heart have dealt
With her but lightly." — When the Pilgrims dwelt
First on these shores, lest savage hands should steal
To precious graves with desecrating tread,
The burial-field was with the ploughshare crossed,
And there the maize her silken tresses tossed.
With thanks those Pilgrims ate their bitter bread,
While peaceful harvests hid what they had lost.
— What if her smiles concealed from you her dead?

GOLDEN-ROD.

MIDSUMMER music in the grass —
The cricket and the grasshopper;
White daisies and red clover pass;
The caterpillar trails her fur
After the languid butterfly;
But green and spring-like is the sod
Where autumn's earliest lamps I spy —
The tapers of the golden-rod.

This flower is fuller of the sun
Than any our pale North can show;

It has the heart of August won,
And scatters wide the warmth and glow
Kindled at summer's mid-noon blaze,
Where gentians of September bloom;
Along October's leaf-strewn ways,
And through November's paths of gloom.

As lavish of its golden light
As sunshine's self this blossom is;
Its starry chandeliers burn bright
All day; and have you noted this —
A perfect sun in every flower?
Ten thousand thousand fairy suns,
Raying from new disks hour by hour,
As up the stalk the life-flash runs?

"A worthless plant, a flaunting weed!
Abundant splendors are too cheap."
Neighbor, not so! unless, indeed,
You would from heaven the sunsets sweep,
And count as mean the common day:
Meseems the world has not so much
Superfluous beauty, that we may
Blight anything with scornful touch.

In times long past, the harebell's grace
I blent with this resplendent spray;
And one I loved would lean her face
Toward their contrasted hues, and say,
The sun-like gold, the heavenly blue,
I know not which delights me most;" —
Sacred are both, dear heart, to you:
They lit your feet from earth's dim coast.

The swinging harebell faintly tolled
Upon the still, autumnal air;
The golden-rod bent down to hold
Her rows of funeral-torches there.
All blossoms, sweet! to you were dear;
No homeliest weed you counted vile:
The flower I choose, of all the year,
Is this, that last beheld your smile.

Herald of autumn's reign, it sets
Gay bonfires blazing round the fields:
Rich Autumn pays in gold his debts
For tenancy that Summer yields.
Beauty's slow harvest now comes in,
New promise with fulfillment won;
The heart's vast hope does but begin,
Filled with ripe seeds of sweetness gone.

Because its myriad glimmering plumes
Like a great army's stir and wave;
Because its gold in billows blooms,
The poor man's barren walks to lave;
Because its sun-shaped blossoms show
How souls receive the light of God,
And unto earth give back that glow —
I thank Him for the golden-rod!

AT HER BEDSIDE.

FLY, little bird, fly
Close to the sick woman's bed!
Tell her of streams running by,
Of branches that wave overhead;
When shut is the weary one's eye,
Wake her soul to your music, instead!

Sing, little bird, sing
Through the thin cloud of her dreams!
Breezes and wild-flowers bring,
Till the heart of the slumberer seems
To the beautiful woods taking wing,
To the glen where the rivulet gleams.

Wait, little bird, wait
Till her sorrowful burden of pain
Is buried at sleep's summer gate:
Unwind from the quiet some strain,
A lovely new world to create;
Then sing her to health again!

OVER THE HILL.

THERE 's a face I must ever remember,
Though I may not behold it again
Through the golden haze of September,
Or the dreary November rain;
A face that was joyous and tender
As the sea in its summer splendor,
And a smile that was clear and still
As the sunrise over the hill.

There were footsteps that flew to meet me,
Crushing the moss and the fern;
There were eyes that brightened to greet me,
When others were cold and stern.
We crossed, in the sunny weather,
The blossoming fields together,

And rested beside the rill,
Coming over the hill.

Now the hill is barren and lonely,
And the sea is moaning beyond,
And the bleak, bleak winds answer only
To my heart's cry, wild and fond.
Pale asters, with dewdrops laden,
Do you weep for the blue-eyed maiden
Who sleeps in the graveyard chill —
In the graveyard over the hill?

No longer the sea wears the glory
That lighted its billows of old;
The moss and the fern heard a story
That never again can be told.
But I only seem to outlive her:
Green heights lie beyond the dark river;
There my soul to her step will thrill,
Coming over the hill.

WORKMATES.

Face and figure of a maiden,
Set in memory's antique gold:
In the eyelids' droop, thought-laden,
In the dark hair's shining fold
Over the wide, blue-veined brow,
One I love is with me now.

Side by side we work together,
'Mid the whirring of the wheels;
Side by side we wonder whether
Each the other's longing feels
To throw open her heart's door,
With a "Welcome, evermore!"

Suddenly the seals are broken:
How it came, we cannot tell, —
Eyes have met, and lips have spoken:
We have known each other well,
Ages since, in some fair earth,
Playmates ere our mortal birth.

Noisy wheels break into singing,
Bird-like thoughts with thoughts ascend,
Into the free air upspringing:
Oh, the sweetness of a friend!
What if earth is cold and wide?
Here we two are, side by side.

Out into the summer gazing
From the windows of the mill, —
Running river, cattle grazing,
White clouds on the dark-blue hill: —
Did we murmur then, shut in
With a hundred girls, to spin?

No: for discontent were treason,
When the breath of all the flowers,
And the soul of the bright season
Entering, made their gladness ours.
Of the summer we were part;
Nature gave us her whole heart.

When the slow day dragged, we chanted,
Each to each, some holy hymn,
Till the sunset toward us slanted
As in old cathedrals dim,
Or a cloistered forest-aisle,
Wakening in us smile for smile.

Daily bread our hands were winning, —
Winning more than bread alone;
Unseen fingers, with us spinning,
Twined all life into our own,
Knit our being's fibres fast
Into unknown futures vast.

And we touched the flying spindles,
As if so we struck a note
Unto which the whole world kindles;
Tidal harmonies, that float
Into chords on earth unheard —
Mystic chant of Work and Word.

Work! it thrilled new meanings through us
From creation's undersong;
Unto all great souls it drew us,
Men heroic, angels strong:
Firm our little thread spun we
For the web of Destiny.

Time has led us onward slowly,
Oh, my low-browed maiden dear,
Into duties new and holy,
Widening labors, year by year:
Good it is for us, in sooth,
That we bore the yoke in youth.

Good it is in the beginning
Toil for our true friend to know,
Place in God's grand purpose winning,
Deep into His life to grow;

THE WATER LILY. Page 231.

Saying by our work, as He,
Unto light and order, "Be!"

Good and sweet the friendship given
To our girlish working-days,
Bond that death must leave unriven:
While we walk in parted ways,
Close the thought of you I hold,
Set in memory's antique gold.

THE WATER-LILY.

FROM the reek of the pond the lily
Has risen, in raiment white,
A spirit of air and water,
A form of incarnate light.
Yet, except for the rooted stem
That steadies her diadem,
Except for the earth she is nourished by,
Could the soul of the lily have climbed to the sky?

MY MERRIMACK.

DEAR river, that didst wander through
My childhood's path, a vein of blue,
Freshening the pulses of my youth
Toward glimpsing hope and opening truth,
A heart thank-laden hastens back
To rest by thee, bright Merrimack!

From hills with sunlit mists aflame,
Down over rocky rapids came,
Breaking in wonder on my sight,
The living water, glad as light.
A child, strayed inland from the sea,
The Merrimack adopted me.

Hemlock and pine inwove their spell
Around my thoughts; the forest smell
Of moss and fern was incense sweet;
A miracle that stayed my feet,
A blossom-revelation new,
Sprang from thy side, the harebell blue!

Days thickened with the dust of toil;
My paradise could no man spoil.
A presence by my window played;
A dimpling, glancing light and shade:

Whatever sweetness found an end,
The river was my constant friend.

Though dew from the Franconia hills
Into thy crystal cup distills;
Though Winnepesaukee's ripples bright
And Pemigewasset's placid light,
Music of waterfall and brook,
Are in thy voice and in thy look:

Dearer companionship than thine,
Friends who have made earth half divine,
Voices that blend with thy wild birds
And woodland flower their loving words, —
Heart-shelter that is holy ground,
Beside thy waters have I found.

River of inspirations sweet,
Wash off the dust from weary feet!
Where shuttles clash and spindles whirl,
Sing to the homesick working-girl
In cheerful undertones, and lift
Her thoughts along thy current swift!

The joy that thou hast been to me,
To all thy bordering toilers be!
Broaden in friendship, bloom with friends,
Until thy mountain freshness spends
Itself adown thy seaward track,
My beautiful blue Merrimack!

THE FIELD-SPARROW.

A BUBBLE of music floats
The slope of the hillside over;
A little wandering sparrow's notes;
And the bloom of yarrow and clover,
And the smell of sweet-fern and the bayberry leaf,
On his ripple of song are stealing;
For he is a chartered thief,
The wealth of the fields revealing.

One syllable, clear and soft
As a raindrop's silvery patter,
Or a tinkling fairy-bell, heard aloft,
In the midst of the merry chatter
Of robin and linnet and wren and jay, —
One syllable, oft repeated:
He has but a word to say,
And of that he will not be cheated.

The singer I have not seen;
But the song I arise and follow
The brown hills over, the pastures green,
And into the sunlit hollow.
With a joy that his life unto mine has lent,
I can feel my glad eyes glisten,
Though he hides in his happy tent,
While I stand outside, and listen.

This way would I also sing,
My dear little hillside neighbor!
A tender carol of peace to bring
To the sunburnt fields of labor
Is better than making a loud ado;
Trill on, amid clover and yarrow!
There 's a heart-beat echoing you,
And blessing you, blithe little sparrow!

OCTOBER.

SEPTEMBER days were green and fair,
But sharp winds pierced the shining air,
That froze the dimples of the river,
And made the wayside blossom shiver.

September's heart was winter-steeled;
The frost lay white upon the field,
Day after day; the northern blast
Withered the bracken as it passed.

"The time of snow!" we said. Not yet!
Flushed with suffusions of regret,
Out of the south October came,
Setting the forest's heart aflame.

Summer returned with her, and still
She lingers with us: stream and hill
And wide fields waver like a dream
Through warm, soft mist and tender gleam.

Again the gentian dares unfold
Blue fringes closed against the cold;
Again, in mossy solitudes,
The glimmering aster lights the woods.

One mass of sunshine glows the beech;
Great oaks, in scarlet drapery, reach
Across the crimson blackberry vine,
Toward purple ash and sombre pine.

The orange-tinted sassafras
With quaintest foliage strews the grass;
Witch-hazel shakes her gold curls out,
'Mid the red maple's flying rout.

Our forests, that so lately stood
Like any green familiar wood,
Aladdin's fabulous tale repeat;
The trees drop jewels at our feet.

With every day some splendor strange!
With every hour some subtle change!
Of our plain world how could we guess
Such miracles of loveliness?

Ah, let the green Septembers go!
They promise more than they bestow;
But now the earth around us seems
Clad in the radiance of our dreams.

Omen of joy to thee and me,
Dear friend, may this rare season be!
Life has not had its perfect test;
Our latest years may be our best.

Heaven's inmost warmth may wait us still.
What if, beyond time's autumn chill,
There bless us, ere we hence depart,
A glad October of the heart!

WHEN THE WOODS TURN BROWN.

How will it be when the roses fade
Out of the garden and out of the glade?
When the fresh pink bloom of the sweet-brier wild,
That leans from the dell like the cheek of a child,
Is changed for dry hips on a thorny bush?
Then scarlet and carmine the groves will flush.

How will it be when the autumn flowers
Wither away from their leafless bowers?
When sun-flower and star-flower and golden-rod
Glimmer no more from the frosted sod,
And the hillside nooks are empty and cold?
Then the forest-tops will be gay with gold.

How will it be when the woods turn brown,
Their gold and their crimson all dropped down,
And crumbled to dust? Oh, then, as we lay
Our ear to Earth's lips, we shall hear her say,

"In the dark, I am seeking new gems for my crown:"—
We will dream of green leaves, when the woods turn brown.

NOVEMBER.

WHO said November's face was grim?
Who said her voice was harsh and sad?
I heard her sing in wood-paths dim,
I met her on the shore, so glad,
So smiling, I could kiss her feet!
There never was a month so sweet.

October's splendid robes, that hid
The beauty of the white-limbed trees,
Have dropped in tatters; yet amid
Those perfect forms the gazer sees
A proud wood-monarch here and there,
Garments of wine-dipped crimson wear.

In precious flakes the autumnal gold
Is clinging to the forest's fringe:
Yon bare twig to the sun will hold
Each separate leaf, to show the tinge
Of glorious rose-light reddening through
Its jewels, beautiful as few.

Where short-lived wild-flowers bloomed and died
The slanting sunbeams fall across
Vine-broideries, woven from side to side
Above mosaics of tinted moss.
So does the Eternal Artist's skill
Hide beauty under beauty still.

And if no note of bee or bird
Through the rapt stillness of the woods
Or the sea's murmurous trance be heard,
A Presence in these solitudes
Upon the spirit seems to press
The dew of God's dear silences.

And if, out of some inner heaven,
With soft relenting comes a day
Whereto the heart of June is given,
All subtle scents and spicery
Through forest crypts and arches steal,
With power unnumbered hurts to heal.

Through yonder rended veil of green,
That used to shut the sky from me,
New glimpses of vast blue are seen;
I never guessed that so much sea

Bordered my little plot of ground,
And held me clasped so close around.

This is the month of sunrise skies
  Intense with molten mist and flame;
Out of the purple deeps arise
  Colors no painter yet could name:
Gold-lilies and the cardinal-flower
Were pale against this gorgeous hour.

Still lovelier when athwart the east
  The level beam of sunset falls:
The tints of wild-flowers long deceased
  Glow then upon the horizon walls;
Shades of the rose and violet
Close to their dear world lingering yet.

What idleness, to moan and fret
  For any season fair, gone by!
Life's secret is not guessed at yet;
  Veil under veil its wonders lie.
Through grief and loss made glorious
The soul of past joy lives in us.

More welcome than voluptuous gales
  This keen, crisp air, as conscience clear:
November breathes no flattering tales;
  The plain truth-teller of the year,
Who wins her heart, and he alone,
Knows she has sweetness all her own.

A WHITE WORLD.

I NEVER knew the world in white
  So beautiful could be
As I have seen it here to-day,
  Beside the wintry sea;
A new earth, bride of a new heaven,
  Has been revealed to me.

The sunrise blended wave and cloud
  In one broad flood of gold,
But touched with rose the world's white robes
  In every curve and fold;
While the blue air did over all
  Its breath in wonder hold.

Earth was a statue half awake
  Beneath her Sculptor's hand:
How the Great Master bends with love
  Above the work He planned,

Easy it is, on such a day,
To feel and understand.

The virgin-birth of Bethlehem,
That snow-pure infancy,
Warm with the rose-bloom of the skies, —
Life's holiest mystery,
God's utter tenderness to man,
Seems written on all I see.

For earth, this vast humanity,
The Lord's own body is;
This life of ours He entereth in,
Shares all its destinies;
And we shall put His whiteness on
When we are wholly His.

And so the day dies like a dream,
A prophecy divine:
Dear Master, through us perfectly
Shape Thou Thy white design,
Nor let one life be left a blot
On this fair world of Thine!

BEVERLY FARMS, January 1, 1873.

SNOW-BLOOM.

WHERE does the snow go,
So white on the ground?
Under May's azure
No flake can be found.
Look into the lily
Some sweet summer hour;
There blooms the snow
In the heart of the flower.

Where does the love go,
Frozen to grief?
Along the heart's fibres
Its cold thrill is brief.
The snow-fall of sorrow
Turns not to dry dust;
It lives in white blossoms
Of patience and trust.

BETWEEN WINTER AND SPRING.

THAT weary time that comes between
The last snow and the earliest green!
One barren clod the wide fields lie,
And all our comfort is the sky.

We know the sap is in the tree, —
That life at buried roots must be;
Yet dreary is the earth we tread,
As if her very soul were dead.

Before the dawn the darkest hour,
The blank and chill before the flower!
Beauty prepares this background gray
Whereon her loveliest tints to lay.

Ah, patience! ere we dream of it,
Spring's fair new gospel will be writ.
Look up! good only can befall,
While heaven is at the heart of all!

FRIEND BROOK.

THOU hastenest down between the hills to meet me at the road,
The secret scarcely lisping of thy beautiful abode
Among the pines and mosses of yonder shadowy height,
Where thou dost sparkle into song, and fill the woods with light.

The traveler crossing the rude bridge, dear Brook, would never guess,
From thy staid movement through the fields, thy mountain loveliness;
Thou wanderest among weeds and grain in commonplace disguise,
Most happy to evade the glance of undiscerning eyes.

But I have heard thee whispering, "Call me by name, 'Friend Brook,
For that I am to thee; come up to my remotest nook,
And I will give thee freedom of the hospitable hills,
And pour my freshness through thy life, from clouds and springs and rills."

O happy soul! thy song is sweet upon the mountain side;
The trees bend over thee, in league to stay thy downward tide;
The wild arbutus, flushed with haste, trails close to make appeal
For brief delay, and after her the wet-eyed violets steal.

But not the white wake-robin, nor the star-flower on thy brink,
Nor any forest-shrub whose roots from thee refreshment drink,
Can need thee with my need, Friend Brook; and never any bird
Can trill such gratitude to thee as my heart chants, unheard.

No; not the wood-thrush singing in the pine-trees' twilight shade,
As if one half his melody the boughs' low murmur made, —
A love-song eloquent with breaks of speechless tenderness,
A music heard through thy soft rush, too sweet to tell or guess.

For thou respondest humanly, almost, to human thought,
Soothing the silent pain wherewith a stranger meddleth not;
Healing sick fancies from thy clear life's overflowing cup,
And winning flagging foot and heart forever up and up.

Friend Brook, I hold thee dearest yet for what I do not know
Of thy pure secret springs afar, the mystery of thy flow
Out of the mountain caverns, hid by tangled brier and fern;
A friend is most a friend of whom the best remains to learn.

New-born each moment, flashing light through worn, accustomed ways,
With gentle hindrance, gay surprise, sweet hurryings and delays;
Spirit that issuest forth from wells of life unguessed, unseen,
A revelation thou of all that holiest friendships mean!

I will not name the hills that meet to hold thee hand in hand,
The summits leaning toward thy voice, the mountain, lone and grand,
That looks across to welcome thee into the open light;
Be hidden, O my brook, from all save love's anointed sight!

Yet I am glad that every year, and all the summer long,
Some wayfarers will seek thy side, and listen to thy song,
And feel their hearts bound on with thine over the rocks of care;
With such as these, through shade and shine, thy friendship will I share.

And out of their abounding joy new loveliness and grace
Will grow into the memory of thy green abiding-place. —
Thou veilest thyself in sun-touched mists through which I may not look,
Yet blends my being with thy flow, in stir and rest, Friend Brook!

ONE BUTTERFLY.

A PURPLE stretch of mountains,
And, them and me between,
A bed of sweet, red clover,
Billows of meadowy green.
Across the wind-swept pastures
One snow-white butterfly
Sails toward the grand horizon,
Sole voyager of the sky.

The delicate cloud-shadows
Win from the mountain sides

Glimpses of shy, strange color,
That common sunshine hides.
Who reads that revelation?
We only, thou and I,
In all this noon-lit silence,
My white-winged butterfly!

Is it a waste of beauty,
That only we behold
Those emerald hues ethereal,
Wavering through pearl and gold?
My heart aches with the wonder
Of all the unrolling sky,
The new, immense horizons,
My lonely butterfly!

WHITE EVERLASTING FLOWERS.

THAT morning on the mountain-top!
Could the day's chariot wheel but stop,
And leave us in this trance of light
Upon our autumn-crimsoned height —
Summit of lifted solitudes,
Where but the hermit breeze intrudes;
With one blue river glimpsed in sheen
Along the valley's perfect green;
With lakes that open limpid eyes
Unto the old heavens' new surprise;
And over all, a purple range
Of hills, that glow and pale, and change
To pearl and turquoise, rose and snow,
As cloud processions past them go,
On unknown errands of the air.

"Yes! earth to-day in heaven hath share!"
We told each other in our thought,
Though in that high hush lips moved not.
If that were only Bearcamp stream
That lit the vale with sinuous gleam;
If mountains that in opal shone
By common, rustic names were known, —
Old Israel, Hunchback, and the rest, —
In floods of beauty they lay blest;
And bathed in the same bliss were we
On the pine-crest of Ossipee.

"Earth is not mere hard earth," we said,
"A place of toil for daily bread,
A clod to cover us at last,
When struggle and defeat are past;

But heaven is hid therein alway —
The gem's clear essence in dull clay;
And by celestial visionings
Alone we read the truth of things.
Since life puts off her rough disguise
As into purer air we rise,
Why should we leave our hard-won peak,
The lowland commonplace to seek?
Here, with transfiguring rapture thrilled,
Here let us tabernacles build!"

What was it stopped our musing talk?
White blossoms scattered on a rock;
White everlasting flowers, that grow
Where bleakest north winds beat and blow, —
New England's amaranth. Some tired hand
Had dropped them, or, in visions grand
As ours, had let them slip, forgot,
The text of our bewildered thought
Left to illumine and explain;
Pathetic flowers, that might have lain
Days, months, in their torn raiment white —
Undying children of the light —
By strangers gathered, and thrown by,
Rapt with these mountain splendors high.

Climb for the white flower of thy dream,
O pilgrim! let the vision gleam
As hope and possibility,
Down the low level that must be
Thy usual path; but do not stay,
Enamored of supernal day,
While thy benighted comrades grope
In shadows on the dangerous slope!
Its light in eye and heart shall be
A signal betwixt them and thee
Of joy to wait for and desire,
While faith can glow, or souls aspire.

Yet hold fast something to recall
The glory that envelops all
The meanest dust that round us lies, —
Some glimpse of near eternities, —
Though but one everlasting flower,
Or memory of one deathless hour:
For waif more saddening none may find
Than amaranth plucked, and left behind.

WEST OSSIPEE, N. H., September, 1875.

ON THE LEDGE.

RESTORED unto life by the sun and the breeze!
Rich balsams float down from the resinous trees,
Stirring into quick health every pulse of the air:
Released once again from imprisoning care,
At the gate of green pastures my soul lieth free,
And to go in or out is refreshment to me.

Lo, yonder is Paradise! Softly below,
The river that watereth Eden doth flow!
I behold, through blue gaps in the mountainous west,
Height ascending on height, the abodes of the blest:
And I cannot tell whether to climb were more sweet
Than to lap me in beauty spread out at my feet.

There sways a white cloud on yon loftiest peak,
A wind from beyond it is fanning my cheek;
Through the oak and the birch glides a musical shiver,
A ripple just silvers the dusk of the river.
— Though I may not know how, each is part of the whole
Perfect flood-tide of peace that is brimming my soul.

Here is shelter and outlook, deep rest and wide room;
The pine woods behind, breathing balm out of gloom;
Before, the great hills over vast levels lean, —
A glory of purple, a splendor of green.
As a new earth and heaven, ye are mine once again.
Ye beautiful meadows and mountains of Maine!

BETHEL, ME., September, 1879.

UP THE ANDROSCOGGIN.

SHINING along its windings
I behold the river rush,
Hinting of lakes deep hidden
In a far-off mountain hush.
It flashes their mystery hither;
It carries it onward — whither?
Like the ocean-moan in the heart of a shell,
I hear that steady monotone tell
How all great action reveals at length
Unguessed resources of lonely strength.

Swift traveler, hurrying river,
Whence hast thou come to-day?
From tenantless forests of Errol,
Green glooms of Magalloway;

White lilies, in careless order,
Thronged out through thy rippling border,
And the moss-hung limbs of the aged fir
Waved over thee weirdly, in farewell stir,
And the old cliff-eagle screamed after thee, —
Umbagog's wild nursling, escaped to the sea.

Where the foot-hills of Waumbek-Methna
Descend to the woodlands of Maine,
Down fliest thou, as unto thy kindred, —
A steed with a loosened rein.
No art may depict the fierce fashion,
The impulse, the plunge, and the passion
Of brown waters bounding through barriers strait,
To gaze on the solemn, crowned summits, that wait,
Advance, then recede into distances gray,
While, moaning and sobered, thou goest thy way.

Beyond are the fields of Bethel,
The meadows of perfect green,
Where, a fugitive weary and listless,
Thou sleepest in silvery sheen.
But lower and less are the mountains
That dip their rough feet in thy fountains,
And thy onward journey, thou wilderness stream,
Is as when one wakes from a morning dream
Unto daily labor, while earth and air
Grow dull with a tinge of pervading care.

Thy song rolled clear, Androscoggin!
Like the rune of a seer it ran:
The story and life of a river
Are the life and the story of man.
The resolve, the romantic endeavor —
The dream that fulfills itself never —
With freshness that urges, and full veins that boil,
Down the hillsides of hope, over levels of toil,
Till the Will that moves under our purpose is done,
And the stream and the ocean have met, and are one!

BERLIN FALLS, N. H., September, 1878.

IN A CLOUD RIFT.

UPON our loftiest White Mountain peak,
Filled with the freshness of untainted air,
We sat, nor cared to listen or to speak
To one another, for the silence there
Was eloquent with God's presence. Not a sound
Uttered the winds in their unhindered sweep

Above us through the heavens. The gulf profound,
Below us, seethed with mists, a sullen deep:
From thawless ice-caves of a vast ravine
Rolled sheeted clouds across the lands unseen.

How far away seemed all that we had known
In homely levels of the earth beneath,
Where still our thoughts went wandering! "Turn thee!" Blown
Apart before us, a dissolving wreath
Of clouds framed in a picture on the air:
The fair long Saco Valley, whence we came;
The hills and lakes of Ossipee;—and there
Glimmers the sea! Some pleasant, well-known name
With every break to memory hastens back;—
Monadnock, Winnepesaukee, Merrimack.

On widening vistas broader rifts unfold;
Far off into the waters of Champlain
Great sunset-summits dip their flaming gold;
There winds the dim Connecticut, a vein
Of silver through aerial green; and here
The upland street of rural Bethlehem;
And there the roofs of Bethel. Azure-clear
Shimmers the Androscoggin; like a gem
Umbagog glistens; and Katahdin gleams;—
Or is it some dim mountain of our dreams?

Our own familiar world, not yet half known,
Nor loved enough, in tints of Paradise
Lies there before us, now so lovely grown
We wonder what strange film was on our eyes
Ere we climbed hither. But again the cloud,
Descending, shuts the beauteous vision out;
Between us the abysses spread their shroud;
We are to earth, as earth to us, a doubt;
Dear home-folk, skyward seeking us, can see
No crest or crag where pilgrim feet may be.

Who whispered unto us of life and death,
As silence closed upon our hearts once more?
On heights where angels sit, perhaps a breath
May clear the separating gulfs; a door
May open sometimes betwixt earth and heaven,
And life's most haunting mystery be shown
A fog-drift of the mind, scattered and driven
Before the winds of God; no vague unknown
Death's dreaded path,—only a curtained stair;
And heaven but earth raised into purer air.

MOUNTAINEER'S PRAYER.

GIRD me with the strength of Thy steadfast hills,
The speed of Thy streams give me!
In the spirit that calms, with the life that thrills,
I would stand or run for Thee.
Let me be Thy voice, or Thy silent power,
As the cataract, or the peak, —
An eternal thought, in my earthly hour,
Of the living God to speak!

Clothe me in the rose-tints of Thy skies,
Upon morning summits laid!
Robe me in the purple and gold that flies
Through Thy shuttles of light and shade!
Let me rise and rejoice in Thy smile aright,
As mountains and forests do!
Let me welcome Thy twilight and Thy night,
And wait for Thy dawn anew!

Give me of the brook's faith, joyously sung
Under clank of its icy chain!
Give me of the patience that hides among
Thy hill-tops, in mist and rain!
Lift me up from the clod, let me breathe Thy breath!
Thy beauty and strength give me!
Let me lose both the name and the meaning of death,
In the life that I share with Thee!

ASLEEP ON THE SUMMIT.

UPON the mountain's stormy breast
I laid me down and sank to rest;
I felt the wild thrill of the blast,
Defied and welcomed as it passed,
And made my lullaby the psalm
Of strife that wins immortal calm.

Cradled and rocked by wind and cloud,
Safe pillowed on the summit proud,
Steadied by that encircling arm
Which holds the universe from harm,
I knew the Lord my soul would keep,
Among His mountain-tops asleep.

MOUNT WASHINGTON, N. H., August, 1877.

SHARED.

I SAID it in the meadow-path,
I say it on the mountain-stairs; —
The best things any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

The air we breathe, the sky, the breeze,
The light without us and within,
Life, with its unlocked treasuries,
God's riches, are for all to win.

The grass is softer to my tread
For rest it yields unnumbered feet;
Sweeter to me the wild-rose red
Because she makes the whole world sweet.

Into your heavenly loneliness
Ye welcomed me, O solemn peaks!
And me in every guest you bless
Who reverently your mystery seeks.

And up the radiant peopled way
That opens into worlds unknown,
It will be life's delight to say,
"Heaven is not heaven for me alone."

Rich by my brethren's poverty!
Such wealth were hideous! I am blest
Only in what they share with me,
In what I share with all the rest.

FROM THE HILLS.

FROM white brows flushed with heavenly morning-red,
From faces beautiful with prophecy
Of the sun-gospel a new day shall see,
From cloud-wrapt shape and light-anointed head,
Out of whose gracious mystery words are said
That wake abysmal voices, and set free
Reverberations of eternity,
Down to the level ocean are we sped,
Where broken tints in wide illusion blend,
And all sounds gather into monotone.
Always unto great seers have mountains shown
Their Founder and Uprearer as man's friend.
The hills are a religion; but the sea,
O Truth, is Doubt's unanswered moan to thee!

A PASSING SAIL.

I WATCHED the white sails moving
On the summer sea:
One went bird-wise, wing and wing,
Fluttering joyously;
Ocean-space she seemed to fill
With her graceful flight;
Fancy, spell-bound, followed her,
Till she was out of sight.

Behind her, one was dimly
Penciled on the mist;
If the sail-speck moved at all,
None, in passing, wist.
Yet was this an Indian bark
On her voyage of years;
And that a pretty pleasure-yacht,
An idling school-boy steers.

No argosy or frigate
Courtesies in wavelets light;
Ships that carry world-supplies
Dare mid-ocean's might.
Trifler, haply freighted lives,
Unadmired of thee,
Grander are than thy small guess,
And farther out at sea.

BERMOOTHES.

UNDER the eaves of a Southern sky,
Where the cloud roof bends to the ocean floor,
Hid in lonely seas, the Bermoothes lie;
An emerald cluster that Neptune bore
Away from the covetous earth-god's sight,
And placed in a setting of sapphire light.

Prospero's realm and Miranda's isles,
Floating to music of Ariel
Upon fantasy's billow, that glows and smiles,
Flushing response to the lovely spell;
Tremulous color and outline seem
Lucent as glassed in a life-like dream.

And away and afar, as in dreams we drift,
Glimmer the blossoming orange groves;

And the dolphin-tints of the water shift;
And the angel-fish through the pure lymph moves
With the gleam of a rainbow; and soft clouds sweep
Over isle and wave like the wings of sleep.

Deepens the dream into memory now: —
The straight roads cut through the cedar hills,
The coral cliffs and the roofs of snow,
And the crested cardinal-bird, that trills
A carol clear as the ripple of red
He made in the air, as he flashed overhead.

Through pathways trodden of many feet
The gray little ground-dove flutters and cooes;
The bluebird is singing a ballad sweet
As ever was mingled with Northern dews;
And the boatswain-bird from the calm lagoon
Lifts his white length into cloudless noon.

Under this headland cliff as you row,
Follow its bastioned layers down
Into fathomless crystal, far below
Vision or ken: spite of old renown,
So massive a wall could Titan erect
As the little coralline architect?

Against the dusk arches of surf-worn caves
In a shimmer of beryl eddies the tide;
Or brightens to topaz where the waves,
Outlined in foam, on the reef subside;
Or shades into delicate opaline bands
Dreamily lapsing on pale pink sands.

See the banana's broad pennons, the wind
Has torn into shreds in his tropical mood
Look at the mighty old tamarind
That bore fruit in Saladin's babyhood!
See the pomegranates begin to burn,
And the roses, roses, at every turn!

Into high calms of the sunny air
The aloe climbs with her golden flower,
While sentinel yucca and prickly-pear
With lance and with bayonet guard her bower
And the life-leaf creeps by its fibred edge
To hang out gay bells from the jutting ledge.

A glory of oleander-bloom
Borders every bend of the craggy road;
Escaped from dim gardens, a rare perfume
Freights the warm air with its haunting load;

And over the beauty and over the balm
Rises the crown of the royal palm.

Far into the hillsides caverns wind:
  Pillar and ceiling of stalactite
Mirrored in lakes the red torches find;
  Corridors zigzag from light to light;
And the long fern swings down the slippery stair
Over thresholds curtained with maiden-hair.

Outside, with a motion weirdly slow,
  The mangrove walks through secluded coves,
Leaning on crutch-like boughs, that grow
  Downward, and root into tangled groves,
Where, sheltered by jagged rock-shelves wide,
Eeriest sprites of the deep might hide.

Wherever you wander, the sea is in sight,
  With its changeable turquoise green and blue,
And its strange transparence of limpid light:
  You can watch the work that the Nereids do,
Down, down, where their purple fans unfurl,
Planting their coral and sowing their pearl.

Who knows the spot where Atlantis sank?
  Myths of a lovely drowned continent
Homeless drift over waters blank:
  What if these reefs were her monument?
Isthmus and cavernous cape may be
Her mountain summits escaped from the sea.

Spirits alone in these islands dwelt
  All the dumb, dim years ere Columbus sailed,
The old voyagers said; and it might be spelt
  Into dream-books of legend, if wonders failed,
They were demons that shipwrecked Atlantis, affrayed
At the terror of silence themselves had made.

Whatever their burden, the winds have a sound
  As of muffled voices that, moaning, bewail
An unchronicled sorrow, around and around
  Whispering and hushing a half-told tale;
A musical mystery, filling the air
With its endless pathos of vague despair.

And again into fantasy's billowy play
  Ripples memory back, with elusive change;
For chrysolite oceans, a blank of gray,
  Fringed with the films of a mirage strange,
A shimmering blur of blossom and gleam:—
Can it be Bermoothes? or is it a dream?

THE SUNSET-BIRD OF DOMINICA.[1]

DOMINICA'S fire-cleft summits
Rise from bluest of blue oceans;
Dominica's palms and plantains
Feel the trade-wind's mighty motions
Swaying with impetuous stress
The West Indian wilderness.

Tree-ferns wave their fans majestic,
Mangoes lift white-blossomed masses
Bright against the black abutments
Of volcanic mountain-passes;
Carrying with them up the height
Many a gorgeous parasite.

Dominica's crater-cauldron
Seethes against its lava-beaches,
Boils in misty desolation:
Seldom foot its border reaches;
Seldom any traveler's eye
Penetrates its barriers high.

Over hidden precipices
Falls the unseen torrent's thunder;
Windy shrieks and sibilations
Fill the pathless gorge with wonder;
And the dusky Carib hears,
Cowering with mysterious fears.

"Hark!" The Northern hunter listens:
Down the jungles of the highland
Steals a melody unearthly,
Wavering over sea and island;
Can that tender music start
From the crater's hollow heart?

Floats the weird note onward, downward,
Flute-like, eloquent, complaining;
As of one afar off crying,
"Night is coming! Day is waning!"
Toward the voice the hunter glides,
Up the thorny mountain sides.

"Stay thee, stranger!" called the Carib;
"Vain to track a wandering spirit,

[1] One of many new species of birds discovered in the Caribbean Islands by Mr. Frederick A Ober, of Beverly, Massachusetts, and added to the collection in the Smithsonian Institution. The cry of this bird, just before nightfall, which sounds like the words "*Soleil coucher!*" is supposed by the Caribs to be the voice of a spirit; and they believe that whoever tries to follow it will be led into some dreadful calamity.

Bodiless as breeze of sunset.
'T is no living creature! hear it!
'Day is waning!' Without woe
None upon his track may go."

Wailed along the hills the echo,
"Stay thee! stray not into danger!"
Smiling back from splintered ledges,
Up the beetling cliff the stranger
With the slanting sunbeam sped,
Lost in dark woods overhead.

"Will he come again?" They shudder,
Into lengthening shadows peering;
Through the sudden veil of nightfall
Joyfully his footfall hearing;
There the dark-eyed hunter stands,
Sheltering something in his hands!

"Look! a gray bird is your spirit!
On his breast the sunset lingers,
Golden as the hour he sings in:
Touch him! stroke him with light fingers!
Still a spirit, though with wings
Shaped like other birds, he sings."

Need we sail to Indian islands,
That through turquoise oceans glisten,
For strange misinterpretations
Wherewith men to nature listen?
Throbs the air we breathe with good,
By dull hearts misunderstood.

Dearer is the voice from heaven
Warning us that life is waning,
When we know its accents human,
Joy of all the years remaining. —
So, across the seas, I heard
Dominica's sunset-bird.

SEA AND SKY.

THE Sea is wedded to the Sky —
Element unto element:
She spreads above him tenderly
Her blue, transparent tent.

The Sky is mated with the Sea:
In stormy tumult he ascends

Toward her retreating mystery:
Not thus their being blends!

But when her deep, eternal calm
Enters into his restless heart,
Each mirrors back the other's charm;
Nearest when most apart.

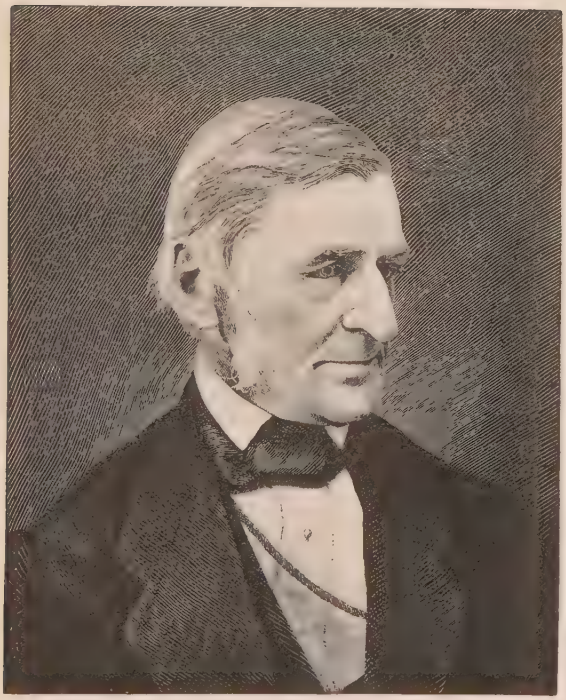
HORIZON.

SECLUDED and embowered to be
Under a whispering maple-tree,
That holds a nest, a flit of wings,
'Mid manifold leaf-flutterings, —
Ah! peace and bliss of summer!
Yet every wind-waft that goes by
Must leave an opening to the sky,
And every bough that lifts must show
A space of sea, a sunset-glow,
A glimpse of wide horizon.

Rest, lacking outlook, is not rest;
Close into our own boundaries pressed,
Our palaces have prison-walls,
Our moneyed poverty appalls,
Our millions count for nothing.
Our creed must have its break of doubt,
Where thought may sometimes flutter out,
And all the vast Beyond flow in;
The threshold where our hopes begin
To climb, is our horizon.

Though rarely, unto me and you,
May mountain vistas bound the view,
Or the sea's glamour lead us on,
Through mystery into mystery drawn —
Even hints are revelations:
The star-edged shadow of a leaf
On sunnier foliage brings a brief
Suggestion of light's ungauged sea
To our dim covert; gives our tree
Its universe-horizon.

In that faint breeze that stirs the bough
I hear the great aerial plough
Furrowing the sky-fields, east and west:
Sphere-music overflows the nest
Of yon home-keeping robin.
And in the sob that stole to me
From the vast anguish of the sea,



RALPH WALDO EMERSON. Page 253.

I felt the restless wastes of soul,—
Life's fragments, moaning for the Whole:
The ear hath its horizon.

Though never barrier may enclose
The sturdy thought that climbs and grows;
Though glimpsed the whole is in the least;
Though healthy relish makes the feast;
Yet man may pine and dwindle:
And thus he wins distrust and dole;
Shutting the windows of his soul,
Kindling his little farthing-light,
And counting all without him night,
Himself his sole horizon.

In life's large invitation blest,
We seek a west beyond the west,
Whose boundless prairie-billows run
Towards grander beckonings of the sun;
Man must explore, forever:
His heaven no limit has, no bars;
Yet, setting sail for unknown stars,
Green earth is to his footfall sweet:
These two his blessedness complete,—
A home and a horizon.

R. W. E.

MAY 25, 1880.

DOORS hast thou opened for us, thinker, seer!
Bars let down into pastures measureless;
The air we breathe to-day, through thee, is freer
Than, buoyant with its freshness, we can guess.

Thy forehead toward the unrisen morning set,
Nature and life faced with their own calm gaze,
No human thought inhospitably met,
Thou beckonest onward, as in earlier days:

A voice that wandered towards us, like a breeze,
From great expanses beyond time and space,
With hints of unexplored eternities
Stirring the sluggish soul new paths to trace;

A word that gave us lightness, as of wings;
Home, welcome, freedom in the Everywhere!
The mention of thy name, like Nature's, brings
A sense of widening worlds and ampler air.

J. G. W.

DECEMBER 17, 1877.

BESIDE the Merrimack he sung
His earliest songs, a Quaker boy,
His father's mowing-fields among,
With brook and bird to share his joy.

And where the Powow glides to meet
The swift rush of the Merrimack,
His manhood's voice rang strong and sweet,
By struggling Freedom echoed back.

He sang beside the solemn sea,
That thrilled through all its vast unrest,
Until the poet's land was free,
To song's wild war-throb in his breast.

Among the mountains rose his voice,
When Peace made beautiful the air:
Our souls rose with him to rejoice;
Our lives looked larger, worthier, there.

And still he sings, by sea and stream,
The songs that charm a nation's heart;
We dare not guess how earth will seem
When his loved footsteps hence depart.

Still sings he, while the year grows gray,
From inner warmth no snows can chill:
Spring breathes through his December lay;
His song might waken bird and rill.

Neither can poet die, nor friend;
To Life, forever, both belong:
Before his human heart we bend,
Far nobler than his noblest song.

O. W. H.

AUGUST 29, 1879.

YOU may change the initials, and say, if you can,
H. O. W. it is, — by what magical plan,
He edges with wisdom the blade of his wit,
Gives his neatly-cut satire its delicate fit;
Fuses humor with pathos, a mixture so fine
Heads are cleared and hearts touched, as by subtlest of wine.

You cannot tell how? Well, then, W. H. O.?
Who is he? His masterly lyrics we know;
We learned in our childhood the charm of his page,
And his verse does not show yet one sign of old age:
Though our own heads may whiten, he makes us feel young
With his songs, through all seasons so cheerily sung.

Go back to the O. W. H., that so long,
As a key, has unlocked for us story and song!
With the tools that he uses no tyro need play;
He is — just himself; works in — just his own way.
Leave the letters in order, — the sign of our debt;
The name that they stand for we cannot forget!

GROWING OLD.

Old, — we are growing old:
Going on through a beautiful road,
Finding earth a more blessed abode;
Nobler work by our hands to be wrought,
Freer paths for our hope and our thought:
Because of the beauty the years unfold,
We are cheerfully growing old!

Old, — we are growing old:
Going up where the sunshine is clear;
Watching grander horizons appear
Out of clouds that enveloped our youth;
Standing firm on the mountains of truth:
Because of the glory the years unfold,
We are joyfully growing old.

Old, — we are growing old:
Going in to the gardens of rest
That glow through the gold of the West,
Where the rose and the amaranth blend,
And each path is the way to a friend:
Because of the peace that the years unfold,
We are thankfully growing old.

Old, — are we growing old?
Life blooms as we travel on
Up the hills, into fresh, lovely dawn:
We are children, who do but begin
The sweetness of living to win:
Because heaven is in us, to bud and unfold,
We are younger, for growing old!

A PRAIRIE NEST.

When youth was in its May-day prime,
Life's blossoming and singing time,
While heart and hope made cheerful chime,
We dropped into our cottage nest
Upon a prairie's mighty breast,
Soft billowing towards the unknown West.

Green earth beneath, blue sky above!
Through verdure vast, the hidden dove
Sent plaintively her moan of love.
South wind and sunshine filled the air;
Thought flew in widening curves, to share
The large, sweet calmness everywhere.

In space two confluent rivers made —
Kaskaskia, that far southward strayed,
And Mississippi, sunk in shade
Of level twilights — nestled we,
As in the cleft branch of a tree;
Green grass, blue sky, all we could see.

Torch-like, our garden plot illumed
The sea-like waste, when sunset gloomed;
Its homely scents the night perfumed;
And through the long, bright noontide hours
Its tints outblazed the prairie flowers:
Gay, gay and glad, that nest of ours!

Our marigolds, our poppies red,
Straggling away from their trim bed,
With phlox and larkspur rioted;
And we, fresh-hearted, every day
Found fantasies wherewith to play,
As daring and as free as they.

The drumming grouse; the whistling quail;
Wild horses prancing down the gale;
A lonely tree, that seemed a sail
Far out at sea; a cabin-spark,
Winking at us across the dark;
The wolf's cry, like a watch-dog's bark;

And sometimes sudden jet and spire
Belting the horizon in with fire,
That writhed and died in serpent-gyre,
Without a care we saw, we heard;
To dread or pleasure lightly stirred
As, in mid-flight, the homeward bird.

The stars hung low above our roof;
Rainbow and cloud-film wrought a woof
Of glory round us, danger-proof:
It sometimes seemed as if our cot
Were the one safe, selected spot
Whereon Heaven centred steadiest thought.

Man was afar, but God close by;
And we might fold our wings, or fly,
Beneath the sun, his open eye;
With bird and breeze in brotherhood,
We simply felt and understood
That earth was fair, that He was good.

Nature, so full of secrets coy,
Wrote out the mystery of her joy
On those broad swells of Illinois.
Her virgin heart to Heaven was true;
We trusted Heaven and her, and knew
The grass was green, the skies were blue,

And life was sweet! What find we more
In wearying quest from shore to shore?
Ah, gracious memory! to restore
Our golden West, its sun, its showers,
And that gay little nest of ours,
Dropped down among the prairie flowers!

A WHISPER OF MEMORY.

How shall I bless thee, unforgotten friend?
A continent holds us asunder here:
They say that souls like meeting drops will blend
In heaven; but I thy earthly way would cheer.

Let me be unto thee like a fresh dawn
After a summer night of gentle rain,
When stifling droughts of yesterday are gone,
And cool and dewy growths arise again;

Or like a streamlet whispering down a hill
Secrets it hath from mountain-summits brought;
Playing about thy footsteps, pure and still,
A voice that answers to thine inmost thought;

Or like the Indian Summer's laden air,
Rich with the fragrance of the whole year's flowers;
A sky, with tints of every season fair;
A breeze-like sweetness of remembered hours!

Ah! might I dream such beauty in me dwelt,
And could surround thee, a new heaven and earth,
It were enough to know that influence felt;
To teach thee whence it rose were little worth.

And yet, if somewhat in these lovely things
Should make thee breathe my name, and start, surprised,
With smiles and tears that half-waked memory brings,
Deep joy it were, to be thus recognized!

THROUGH MINNEHAHA'S VEIL.

Some subtle coloring of the air
Lights every human countenance.
Some faces shine, transfigured, where
A glorifying circumstance
Lifted them from their common phase
To fitness for an aureole's rays.

Some single look comes back to us,
Of eye and brow, through memory's blur,
Re-wakening dreams most beauteous,
Setting the laggard pulse astir
To feel that still we hold it fast —
The buried riches of the past.

Do you recall our holiday,
Just out of school, in middle June, —
Far West, — the time so far away
We cannot now revive the tune
To which our hearts so gayly beat?
We only know the song was sweet.

We watched the mountain-bluffs, that stood
Fleece-wrapped amid the roseate morn,
Rising from Mississippi's flood;
We gazed where leagues on leagues of corn,
Upon the river's farther side,
Tinged with warm gold the prairies wide.

We saw Winona's precipice
Hang dark above Lake Pepin's wave:
Her plaintive legend who would miss —
Or harmless war-whoop of the brave
Red-blanketed and painted Sioux,
That shot by in his birch canoe?

A step beyond the roadside's edge;
A rude bridge swung across a stream,

Sliding as softly from the ledge
As one might whisper in a dream:
The mist-like water, falling there,
Seemed, half-way down, dissolved in air.

And where the drops broke into spray
Of diamonds, forth by millions flung,
Wavering amid their wasteful play,
A visionary rainbow hung.
What need of guide's intrusive call?
We knew it, — Minnehaha's Fall!

I had not missed you from my side,
When bubbled up a laugh as light
As out of naiad lips might glide;
And there you stood, a phantom bright,
Veiled by the spray, a rosy elf,
Merrier than Minnehaha's self.

Poised on the wet rock, in behind
The rainbow, with your face upturned,
Color and outline half defined,
Your dancing eyes, your cheek that burned
With pleasure — I behold at will
The airy apparition still!

Years, years ago! The stream has spilt
Billions of diamonds since that day;
Mill, cabin, barn, by now are built
Close underneath that rainbow spray:
The lonely beauty of the place
Has passed from Minnehaha's face.

And yours, — I never see it now
Except as then, Time's blank between:
The sparkling eye, the lifted brow,
That brought a soul into the scene,
And made the Laughing Water seem
Again a bright, embodied dream.

I have your picture in my heart;
No relic, for it lives and breathes;
The leaves of memory blow apart,
The wavering spray your forehead wreathes:
Your freshness never can grow pale,
Blooming through Minnehaha's veil.

IN VISION.

ALTHOUGH to me remains not one regret
For lovely possibilities that were ours,
Dreamed out across vast beds of prairie-flowers
Into the beckoning West, where the sun set,
A glowing magnet, drawing our hearts on
As if they were but one heart, after him,
Where all our blending future seemed to swim
In light unutterable, a new dawn,
An opening Eden, — although it was well
That picture faded, haunts me yet its spell.

And I am glad I saw it, and with thee, —
Then near as my own spirit, — now as far
Removed into the unseen as that calm star
Which looked across the undulant grassy sea
Into our faces, and sank out of sight.
We dreamed a dream together: nothing more
To thee; to me a vision that before
Nor after broke the seals of heavenly light,
And showed me, rapt, life's beaker mystical,
Glimpsed and withdrawn, the untasted Holy Grail.

I gazed there at thy bidding: was it wrong?
I knew a separate path awaited me,
And I divined another quest for thee,
Under strange skies, where I did not belong:
But for one hour, letting Doubt stand aside,
I saw Life pass, transfigured in Love's form;
The mystery wherewith inmost heaven is warm
Descended, clothed in whiteness, as a bride.
Though that apocalypse annulled thy claim,
Thine eyes yet burn their question through its flame.

Had but that fatal prescience been withheld,
Whereby To-morrow evermore would rise,
Laughing To-day down with relentless eyes,
What beauty had we not together spelled
Out of Life's wonder-book, — or else, what bale!
The dream was not fulfilled, — could never be;
Yet is the vision light of light to me,
Dazzling to blankness the world's bridal tale. —
Elsewhere our orbits meet, receding star,
Lost in the dawn that floods me from afar!

NEED AND WISH.

I NEED not what I cannot have:
  The north wind swept from me this folly,—
With lazy, fretful whine to crave
  Some comfort against melancholy,
Which haunts us all, when dreams go by
  Of what might be, if life were other
Than life is; therefore every sigh
  In working-songs I strive to smother.

You need not what you cannot have,
  Though torrid gusts of hopeless passion
Amid your fancies moan and rave,
  And mould your words to fiery fashion.
What if your wild desire would seize
  Some other heart's delight and glory?
Fate reigns not your one will to please;
  Not yours the only tragic story.

None needs the thing he cannot have:
  The gods know how to give right measure:
Through seeming loss our souls they save;
  They will not leave us slaves of pleasure.
Yet from his longings who would rest?
  To claim, to seek with firm endeavor,
Better that still transcends our best,—
  By this path climbs the soul forever.

THRIFTLESS.

HE said, "I will not save!
  The liberal sun
Is richer for the light he gave
And gives the world. I choose to hold
The mine, and not to hoard the gold.
  Can I be one
To dry my heart to coffered dust,
Or cling to hidden coin, a rust?

"Ask June to stint her bloom
  Against the day
Of sorrowful November gloom!
Free blossom yields abundant seed;
June's thriftlessness is thrift indeed.
  There is no way
To count November's added sighs,
Should lavish June turn pennywise.

"Among the immortal gods
Unthrift is thrift;
Worst poverty — with them at odds!
No wealth but this: to feel the flow.
Of life's deep well to torrents grow,
A current swift,
Whereof no lingering drop would stay
Shut from the generous flood away."

He said, "If I give all
Open to sight,
The everything men riches call,
'T is clearing rubbish from my way
Into the avenues of day,
The doors of light.
Thriftless he can afford to be
Who finds the universe's key."

NO LOSS.

WHAT thou puttest by
Without a sigh,
Is not wanted for God's treasury.

Nor is that a wise,
True sacrifice,
When a stifled aspiration dies.

To His poorest, lest
Thou miss life's quest,
Freely give, like Him, thy very best.

Flame from flame is caught;
Love grudgeth naught;
Keep, that thou mayest share, thy heaven-lit thought.

Go to, hungry heart!
Standing apart,
Gazing on abundance, starving art?

Never lay the blame
On God's great name,
For the lack that of thy choosing came!

Courage! serve and wait!
Soon or late,
Life restores the missing keys of Fate.

Every hour brings seed
That, sown, will feed
Some half-famished Future's eager need.

All thy unclaimed gold,
Riches untold,
Time for thee with usury will hold.

Near thee, close before,
Opens a door:
Enter, heart, and hunger nevermore!

WHAT COMETH?

'T is never the expected guest
Whose charmed approach rewards our waiting:
A nobler brings us royal rest;
A meaner comes, with footsteps grating.
What hinders that, or hastens this?
The encounter neither wholly chooses;
Thy friend for thee elected is;
And who the gift of God refuses?

It never is the dreaded pain:
Forbear thy mad foretaste of sorrow!
Thou fillest the Future's cup in vain;
Fate spills, to pour new wine to-morrow.
And Fate is God, and God is good;
His bitter draught works perfect healing.
Why look for poison in thy food
When Love's own hand is with thee dealing?

Never arrives the dreamed-of joy;
But something larger, deeper, better,
That makes thy old ideal a toy,
And binds thee with a blissful fetter
To the all-beauteous soul of things.—
Hold steady, heart, by night-storms shaken!
The fluttering hope that in thee sings
To boundless freedom shall awaken!

A FRIEND.

Life offers no joy like a friend:
Fulfillment and prophecy blend
In the throb of a heart with our own,—
A heart where we know and are known.

Yet more than thy friend unto thee
Is the friendship hereafter to be,
When the flower of thy life shall unfold
Out of hindering darkness and cold.

Love mocks thee, whose mounting desire
Doth not to the Perfect aspire;
Nor lovest thou the soul thou wouldst win
To shut with thine emptiness in.

A friend! Deep is calling to deep!
A friend! The heart wakes from its sleep,
To behold the worlds lit by one face,
With one heavenward step to keep pace.

O Heart wherein all hearts are known,
Whose infinite throb stirs our own!
O Friend beyond friends! what are we,
Who ask so much less, yet have Thee!

MY FEAR.

BEYOND the boundaries of the grave send I
A single fear,
One only, for myself. Beneath God's eye
The eternal mountains rise in sunshine clear,
And through unwithering woodlands, far and near,
Float hymns of happy souls, like bird-songs high.

Somewhere in that large, beautiful Unknown
My place will be;
And somewhere, clasped within its boundless zone,
O spirits I have clung to here, will ye
Fulfill your dreams of immortality;
My fear is, to be left of you alone.

I know not what awaits, of bliss or bale;
I only know
That of God's guardianship no soul can fail:
But, whether on dusk oceans drifted slow,
Or swift through populous starry streets we go,
Welcome will be loved voices, calling, "Hail!"

We mortals veil such depths of loneliness
With outward calm,
And with the hope of heaven's complete redress
For earthly losses! Failing of that balm,
How can we have the heart for chant or psalm,
Or read our life as more than meaningless?

Yet noble work will there go nobly on;
For love and thought
Will find a grander scope when earth is gone.
Mine, haply, must in solitude be wrought,
Or with heaven's foreigners: I may be brought
Never to those I knew, time's road upon.

You, best belovèd, may new neighbors find,
Whose gifts will blend
With every upward reach of heart and mind:
Toiling among them for some glorious end,
Perhaps you wholly will forget the friend
You walked with, in green pastures left behind.

Shall we then grow more saintly, waxing cold
And deaf to all
The tenderness that breathing lips have told?
Doth not God speak in every human call?
Loss is it from one trusted heart to fall,
Though shipwrecked among splendors manifold.

Still, in that ample realm, none may intrude
On the domain
Of separate, inmost being: if he could,
We should wish back our mortal shells again,
For shelter and seclusion; should complain,
Might we not hide from saints' eyes, if we would.

And who the dearest of his friends would bind
Unto his side
In any world, without a willing mind?
Who needs me not, must not with me abide,
Howe'er my need may seem. Since God is guide,
Each pilgrim soul his lonely way shall find;

And in the untraveled wilderness shall bloom
Life's perfect rose.
A Heart divinely human through the gloom
Throbs like a guiding footstep; warms and glows,
Until the dark with dayspring overflows,
And the bowed soul is crowned with blissful doom.

And so I drop at last my single fear;
In His sweet will
Hiding my own heart's dream, however dear:
All that concerneth me will He fulfill;
No drop of joy His steady hand can spill:
Nor do I wait for heaven, since heaven is here.

COME HOME![1]

Come home with me, beloved, —
Home to the heart of God!
In lonely separate by-ways
We long enough have trod.

[1] "Then I said in my heart, 'Come home with me, beloved, — there is but one home for us all. When we find — in proportion as each of us finds — that home, shall we be gardens of delight to each other, little chambers of rest, galleries of pictures, wells of water.'" — MacDonald's *Seaboard Parish.*

Away from rest and shelter
Why should we further press?
The end of our self-seeking
Is only homelessness.

Come home with me, beloved!
God's children have but one:
Its windows glow and glisten,
Lit from beyond the sun;
Its golden hearth-fires beckon
To all, and aye to each
In deserts deep entangled,
Where but His eye can reach.

Come home with me, beloved!
These earthly homes of ours
Lift up their dull clay turrets
To hide heaven's pearly towers.
We stay shut in, distrustful,
Behind our threshold-line;
But He, with boundless welcome,
Flings wide His gates divine.

Come home with me, beloved!
The dearest of the dear
Is never comprehended
Or rightly measured here:
But we shall know each other
At last, grown pure and wise,
Reading Truth's radiant secret
With Love's enlightened eyes.

Come home with me, beloved!
Each in that house shall have
His own peculiar chamber,
Filled with the gifts He gave —
The mansion's Lord, our Father;
While, sons and princes there,
Each royally with others
His blessedness shall share.

Come home with me, beloved, —
Home to God's waiting heart!
In gladness met together
From paths too long apart;
Strangers no more, but brethren,
One life with Him to live!
Eternally receiving,
Eternally to give!

BEFRIENDED.

My heart records thee friend, yet through no word
  Spoken in side-by-side companionship:
  Reproof or commendation from thy lip
Never my heart with pleasant trouble stirred
  Because it was thy special gift to me;
  A larger blessing have I won from thee.

I heard thee speak out of diviner air
  Than selfishness can breathe in, and I rose,
  And saw the gates of heavenly truth unclose,
Glad with the multitude the feast to share,
  Spread for all souls within. No narrow claim
  Could wish of mine in that pure vision frame.

Thou didst befriend me, humbled at the sight
  Of that great Love which penetrates the need
  Of every feeblest creature; which indeed
Lifts back into the brotherhood of light
  Benighted and neglected souls, to trace
  Their God-like lineage in Christ's dear face.

In that communion of unselfishness
  Which is content its own delight to lose,
  So through some weaker being to transfuse
The breath it lives by — that high blessedness
  Wherein faith's answer is at last complete —
  My soul arose, and went thy soul to meet.

How idle then seemed earth's small jealousies;
  How pitiful the fret of "mine" and "thine"!
  The delicate draught of adulation's wine,
The subtle poison of sweet flatteries,
  Take nor bestow thou, friend, if thou wouldst know
  How hearts in blessing hearts may overflow!

The world has not learned friendship's meaning yet;
  Little indeed is all thou hast to give,
  If it is but thine own; but bid me live
Largeness of life beyond thee, and my debt
  Eternally uncanceled will remain,
  And we, though strangers, have not met in vain.

Show me that aspiration need not die,
  Nor faith put out its eyes to walk by sight;
  Lead me into the freedom of the light,
And I could let thee pass on cheerfully
  To souls whose need was greater, though thy face
  Had been the sunshine of my dwelling place.

For friendship is not ours to lock away
In stifling chests, for fear of thievish hands;
It is a generous sun-warmth, that expands
The soul it flows through, turning night to day;
Light given to us to give abroad again,
Till none in unblessed darkness shall remain.

A friend, — it is another name for God,
Whose love inspires all love, is all in all:
Profane it not, lest lowest shame befall!
Worship no idol, whether star or clod!
Nor think that any friend is truly thine,
Save as life's closest link with Love Divine.

Thou art no stranger, thou whose soul I heard
Speak to my soul across earth's vexing din:
With thee I to the Holiest entered in;
Through thee I understood the Master's word,
Which the whole heavenly with the human blends
In deathless union: — "I have called you friends."

F. W. R.

Books are as waymarks for us, looking back
Far up and down the road:
There rested we, out of the beaten track,
Where a clear streamlet flowed,
And in the running brook a message heard,
Limpid as truth, and sweet
As to the waiting angels, God's dear word;
And there our hillside seat
Took in horizons; felt the mysteries
Of the untrodden height;
While every leaf in all the sheltering trees
Stirred us to strange delight.

Leaves for the healing of the nations, thrilled
By the Eternal Breath!
Under their strengthening shade our hearts were stilled,
Nor dreaded life or death,
But only felt God's presence; only saw
The ever-widening scope
Of Being whose perfection is our law;
Who lifts our human hope
To His own infinite, close neighborhood,
By humble pathways plain,
Through very simpleness misunderstood: —
Such books none write in vain.

There are who fear lest thought should be too free:
  Yet, in this world of His,
Who does God's will may share His liberty;
  Light for its seeker is.
O Robertson! thy life was in thy creed,
  That love is sacrifice;
That all the ways of wisdom Christ-ward lead;
  That man lives, when self dies!
Soldier-apostle! flashes from thy page
  Truth's keen Ithuriel-flame;
And thine the heart of a believing age
  Links with its Saviour's name.

SHOW ME THY WAY.

DARK the night, the snow is falling;
Through the storm are voices calling;
Guides mistaken and misleading,
Far from home and help receding.
  Vain is all those voices say:
    Show me Thy way!

Blind am I as those who guide me;
Let me feel Thee close beside me!
Come as light into my being!
Unto me be eyes, All-Seeing!
  Hear my heart's one wish, I pray:
    Show me Thy way!

Son of Man and Lord Immortal,
Opener of the heavenly portal,
In Thee all my hope is hidden;
Never yet was soul forbidden
  Near Thee, always near, to stay:
    Show me Thy way!

Thou art Truth's eternal morning;
Led by Thee, all evil scorning,
Through the paths of pure salvation,
I shall find Thy habitation,
  Whence I never more shall stray:
    Show me Thy way!

Thou must lead me, and none other;
Truest Lover, Friend, and Brother,
Thou art my soul's shelter, whether
Stars gleam out or tempests gather;
  In Thy presence night is day:
    Show me Thy way!

THE HEART OF GOD.

O LIFE, that breathest in all sweet things
That bud and bloom upon the earth,
That fillest the sky with songs and wings,
That walkest the world through human birth;

O Life, that lightest in every man
A spark of Thine own being's flame,
And wilt that spark to glory fan,
Our listening souls would hear Thy name.

Thou art the Eternal Christ of God,
The Life unending, unbegun;
The Deity brightening through the clod,
The presence of the Invisible One.

Though dear traditions wrap Thee round
In Bethlehem and in Nazareth,
With every soul Thy home is found,
On every shore of life and death.

Before the pyramids were built,
Before the time of Abraham,
To the world's first-born, blind with guilt,
Thou camest, the enlightening word, "I AM."

To free from sin's entangling mesh
Our wandering race, Thy brethren dear,
Thou veiledst Thyself in mortal flesh;
A man with men Thou didst appear.

The voice that unto poet and sage
Whispered of God at hand, unknown,
Hath written itself on history's page,
Speaks in a language like our own:

Speaks to us now, from day to day,
Wafts heavenly peace through earthly care;
Inspires our faint humanity
Thy crown to seek, Thy cross to bear.

Thy voice is sweet in brook and bird,
And boughs that over our home-roofs bend;
And dear in every kindly word,
Borne from the lip of friend to friend.

Thy smile is in the wayside flower,
That opens like a child's blue eye,
Not less than in the sunset hour,
When breathless wonder thrills the sky.

Thou livest, most human, most Divine!
To no veiled Fate or Force we bow:
Far off God's blinding splendors shine;
His near, deep tenderness art Thou!

His heart, whose truth can never fail,
However ours may change or stray;
Before whose love all friendships pale,
Our trust when worlds and suns decay.

For love remains, whatever dies;
The love that breathed us into bloom,
And set us in the eternities,
To fill their void with life's perfume.

Revealer of our being's design,
Through Thee, because of Thee, we are:
Sacred our life, since it is Thine;
No hopeless blight its growth shall mar.

Into the awful vague of death
We follow, where Thou leadest the way;
Feel, through its damps, Thy living breath,
See Thee flood all its dark with day.

We follow, and we find our own,
Whom the grave covered from our sight;
We know them, even as we are known,
Clothed on with heaven's transfiguring light.

O Love, O Friend, our toil is sweet,
Our burden light, for Thou art near;
And Nature's harmonies repeat
Thy Name, to every creature dear.

O Love, O Friend, Thy name is God!
Lord of the unseen and the known!
Thy thoughts the universe have trod,
With worlds like sands of silver strown.

The lonely spheres cry out to Thee
To multiply Thy life in them:
Souls worthier than the stars must be
To sparkle in Thy diadem.

There are who hold Thy truth, and yet
Thyself disown, its origin;
Thee as a stranger they have met,
Nor recognized the Guest within.

And some who seem to hear are deaf·
Lip-service mocks thy sacrifice:

Unlovingness is unbelief;
Untruthful lives are heresies.

But where men aim at noblest things,
Where beats a pure and generous heart,
Where thought leads up on heavenward wings,
There, Saviour of the world, Thou art!

One God to all eternity,
Thou livest, the Only and the Same;
Yet ever to humanity
Art dearest by Thy human name.

Weary of system and of plan,
Life of our life, we turn to Thee;
Divine Ideal of struggling man,
Help us in man Thy face to see!

Lead us through these bewildering ways
Of pain and beauty Thou hast trod!
Thou art our creed, our prayer, our praise,
Christ, the Omnipotent Heart of God!

INDWELLING.

O Spirit, whose name is the Saviour,
Come enter this spirit of mine,
And make it forever Thy dwelling,
A home wherein all things are Thine!

O Son of the Father Eternal,
Once with us, a Friend and a Guest,
Abide in Thine own human mansion,
Its Joy and its Hope and its Rest!

Leave in me no darkness unlighted,
Unwarmed by Thy truth's holy fire;
No thought which Thou canst not inhabit,
No purpose Thou dost not inspire!

Shut in unto silence, my midnight
Is dawn, if Thy Presence I see;
When I open my doors to Thy coming,
Lo! all things are radiant with Thee.

Oh, what is so sweet as to love Thee,
And live with Thee always in sight?
Lord, enter this house of my being,
And fill every room with Thy light!

PRAYING ALWAYS.

SOUL of our souls, only by Thee
The way we see
Through earth's entangling mystery;
We nothing know;
But prayer unbars heaven's gate, and Thou dost show
The one sure path in which we ought to go.

And this is prayer: from self to turn
Thee-ward, and learn
Our life's veiled angels to discern.
Filled with Thy light
We hate the damning evil, love the right:
Awake with Thee, there is in us no night.

Were ours the wish, as vain as strange,
Thy will to change,
Or Thy least purpose disarrange, —
That were not prayer,
But only a rebellious heart laid bare,
Insanely choosing curses for its share.

Thou present God! to Thee we speak;
Weary and weak,
Thy strength Divine we struggling seek!
Thou wilt attend
To every faintest sigh we upward send;
Thou talkest with our thoughts, as friend with friend.

The battle of our life is won,
And heaven begun,
When we can say, "Thy will be done!"
But, Lord, until
These restless hearts in Thy deep love are still,
We pray thee, "Teach us how to do Thy will!"

We cry with Ajax, Give us light!
A glimpse, a sight,
Of midnight foes that we must fight!
They hide within,
They lurk without, the subtle hordes of sin:
By mortal might shall no man victory win.

The prayer of faith availeth much:
Thou hearest such;
Thy hand we in the darkness touch.
Oh, not apart
Stayest Thou on some high throne, all-loving Heart!
Helper in times of need we know Thou art.

Nor nursing each our own distress,
To Thee we press;
Prayer's overflow drowns selfishness:
Soul within soul,
One voice to Thee our linked petitions roll;
Healer of the world's hurt, oh, make us whole!

And when arise serener days,
Whose air is praise,
The song of thankfulness we raise
On high shall be,
Not that to some vast All we bend the knee,
But that each soul has one sure friend in Thee.

Soul of our souls, with boundless cheer
Forever near,
Our being's breath and atmosphere,
The world seems bleak
Only when shelter in drear self we seek:
The joy of life is, man to Thee may speak!

CHRIST THE LIGHT.

Out of labyrinths of thought,
Where bewildering gleams confuse,
From our wanderings have we brought
Only broken, tangled clues.
But this one thing certain is:
In Thy world, O God, Thou art!
Wearied with earth's mysteries,
We would rest upon Thy heart!

Thou, Immanuel, God with us,
Feelest all our human need:
From Thy guidance glorious
Let no falsehood us mislead!
Only by Thy breath alive,
Only through Thy life complete,
Help us upward still to strive,
In the prints of Thy dear feet!

As the planets to the sun,
We would moor our souls to Thee;
Kindle us, All-Heavenly One,
Torches of Thy truth to be!
Thou in our humanity,
We as rays of Thee to shine,
Centred, fixed, sustained in Thee,
Light supreme and Life Divine!

A STRAY LEAF.

In Eastern legend, the good Mussulman
Saves every parchment-shred beneath his feet,
Hoping thereon great Allah's name to meet.

Is not the Book of Life yet incomplete?
Who looks abroad, its scattered leaves may find,
Flying upon the wild wings of the wind.

Though torn, though hidden unseemly blots behind,
Each soul of man reveals the Name Divine.
Leaves of His volume are thy being and mine;

Leaves of His Book, and parts of His great plan.—
Dear Father, Thy handwriting make us see
On each soiled fragment of humanity!

NOT PURE, BUT PURIFIED.

How cleanse a heart that is defiled?
God may forgive the sin,
But guilt is canker, and eats in;
Is tempest, bringing shipwreck wild:
Yet only as a little child
Shall man His kingdom win.

The pearl of innocence, once lost,
Can never be replaced
Upon the brow its whiteness graced:
Yet unto swine such pearls are tossed;
And earth is paved with gems of cost,
Scattered in spendthrift waste.

Alas! we cannot purely love,
We cannot nobly hate;
Our tears of blood are wept too late.
With halting steps we upward move,
Fearing lest even our house above
Be left us desolate.

And if there were no Voice to say,
"Go thou, and sin no more!
Love, that forgives, can all restore;
Thou art made whole!"—could any stay
Heart-bare beneath truth's probing ray,
Unscathed by terrors sore?

BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

O Christ! the memory of our sin
Thy healing love will hide;
With Thee our souls in peace abide;
In Thee heaven's childhood we begin:
Thy Kingdom we shall enter in,
Not pure, but purified!

MYRA.[1]

Despair not thou of any fallen soul's fate,
Till thou hast knelt beside it in the mire,
And mingled with its moanings desolate
The heavenward whisper of thy heart's desire;
Till thou hast felt it thrill with thine own faith
In Him who looks not on us as we are,
But wakes the immortal in us by His breath,
And puts remembrance of our sins afar.

The noblest creature of a human birth
Rose to its beauteous dignity of place
Not without many a lingering stain of earth,
Wherein all souls are set, a little space;
And thou into the haunts of shame and crime
Like an awakening breeze of Heaven mayest go,
Knowing that out of blackest depths of slime
May spring up lilies whiter than the snow.

It was a dreary, gusty day in March:
A motley group were gathered in a room
Of a vile street, where curses blurred the arch
Of bending heaven, and stained its azure bloom
With the foul breath of throats on fire with hell;
Yet here together had they come to pray, —
Wretches who knew the Name blasphemed too well,
And saints who leaned on it for staff and stay.

A dark-haired girl sat with bowed head alone,
Stifling the sobs that shook her slender frame,
When one arose, and told, in humbled tone,
How, tired and sick, to God's large house he came,
And as a son at once was made at home!
'T was agony to hear of Heaven's lost wealth;
They tortured her, those white souls, beckoning "Come!"
And she arose, and sought the door by stealth.

Myra! Her young life's freshness trailed through sin,
Its perfume changed to stench and loathliness,

[1] A true story, — a reminiscence of the North End Mission in Boston, some years since. Myra is still living a happy and useful life, in a country home.

Soiled to thought's inmost vesture, — can she win
The heart of Him who hates unrighteousness?
Within, those pleading accents still went on;
Outside, unseemly mirth defiled the air;
Behind her, Life's closed gate; before, Death's yawn:
Whichever way she turned, some new despair!

A woman's step approaches, undismayed;
A woman's voice is whispering, "Return!"
A woman's hand is on her shoulder laid;
And "Myra!" murmur stainless lips that yearn
To breathe their blessing through a sister's woe.
"Nay, let me be!" the wretched Myra cries;
"You would not touch my garments, could you know
How sunk I am; too low even to despise!

"Hell seethes around me in this dreadful street:
Into it let me plunge, it is my place:
Heaven's pavement is too pure for my false feet,
And earth has nothing for me but disgrace."
"But, Myra, think! It is not I that speak;
The message is from Christ, the Undefiled.
Behold His hand put forth through mine to seek
And lead you back! Come home to Him, poor child!"

And tenderly a warm white hand is laid
In outcast Myra's; and the eyes that bend
From blue serenity their proffered aid, —
She knows them for the true eyes of a friend;
And through them, in that moment, seems to break
A glimpse of her own purified womanhood;
Therein doth some divine suggestion make
Celestial possibilities understood.

The eyes, the hand, remove not; and once more,
Following, she knows not how, the way they lead,
The threshold crossed, she is within the door;
She murmurs, "Is there hope for me, indeed?"
And every knee is by one impulse bowed,
And every heart goes up for her in prayer;
And Myra speaks her soul's resolve aloud,
Casting aside, with fear, her vast despair.

Crushed and ashamed, but now in her right mind,
She goes forth where those loving counsels guide,
Shelter and kindly ministries to find,
And strength to breast the mighty social tide
That surges with its currents pitiless
Against such tossed and helpless waifs as she.
Will she again drift wide from happiness?
Can peace in hearts like hers a tenant be?

Listen! Far down the ages rings the Word:
"Scarlet with guilt, ye shall be white as snow!"
"Loving much, be forgiven much!" The dear Lord,
The Infinite Purity, spake to sinners so,
And speaketh still. O mortal, who art thou,
That darest to any soul His peace forbid,
Nor pardon to the erring wilt allow,
Heedless of stains in thine own bosom hid?

Now Myra, sitting at her innocent work,
Like happier women, finds life grow so sweet!
If in her heart remorseful memories lurk,
She, face to face, may her accusers meet;
For Christ's seal on the closed book of the Past
Hath set forgiveness; Love's baptismal dew
Blends with her tears, and through them, falling fast,
She hears His voice: "Lo! I make all things new!"

And what if she be drifted back again,
Toward the black whirlpool, by temptation's stress?
Say not that her repentance was in vain,
Nor stay thy hand from her in wretchedness,
Till she once more stand upright before Heaven,
Firm in humility, and so endure:
Seven times forgive her, — yea, and seven times seven,
Or till thyself art as an angel pure!

Her future is before her, so is thine:
Hers, with an evil blight upon her youth;
Thine, with all influences to guard, refine,
And lure thy spirit upward into truth.
We stand or fall together; whoso shuns
A suffering soul, must from God's way depart:
No stumbling-block before His little ones
Can hurt them like a cold, hard human heart.

Who sows for Heaven, with Heaven at last shall reap;
The sheaves bound up, the gleanings gathered in,
Sower and reaper harvest-home shall keep;
And all along the field — this world of sin —
Shall hope spring up and sweeten the wide air;
Love's holy breath scent every plant that grows;
Heaven's light burst from earth's darkness everywhere;
All wildernesses blossom as the rose!

YE DID IT UNTO ME.

SINCE Christ is still alive in every man
Who has within him one upspringing germ
Of heavenward-reaching life, though crushed, infirm,
And dwindling in the hot simooms that fan
Only the jungle-growths of earth, we can
Best minister to Him by helping them
Who dare not touch His hallowed garment's hem:
Their lives are even as ours, — one piece, one plan.
Him know we not, Him shall we never know,
Till we behold Him in the least of these
Who suffer or who sin. In sick souls He
Lies bound and sighing, asks our sympathies:
Their grateful eyes Thy benison bestow,
Brother and Lord! "Ye did it unto Me."

WOMAN'S EASTER.

WITH Mary, ere dawn, in the garden,
I stand at the tomb of the Lord;
I share in her sorrowing wonder;
I hear through the darkness a word, —
The first the dear Master hath spoken,
Since the awful death-stillness was broken.

He calleth her tenderly, — "Mary!"
Sweet, sweet is His voice in the gloom.
He spake to us first, oh my sisters,
So breathing our lives into bloom!
He lifteth our souls out of prison!
We, earliest, saw Him arisen!

He lives! Read you not the glad tidings
In our eyes, that have gazed into His?
He lives! By His light on our faces
Believe it, and come where He is!
O doubter, and you who denied Him,
Return to your places beside Him!

The message of His resurrection
To man it was woman's to give:
It is fresh in her heart through the ages:
"He lives, that ye also may live,
Unfolding, as He hath, the story
Of manhood's attainable glory."

O Sun, on our souls first arisen,
Give us light for the spirits that grope!
Make us loving and steadfast and loyal
To bear up humanity's hope!
O Friend, who forsakest us never,
Breathe through us thy errands forever!

WHY LIFE IS SWEET.

BECAUSE it cometh up, a heavenly flower,
Out of the earth, divinely sown therein,
To gather grace from shadow and from shower,
And freshness of invisible worlds to win
Unto itself, — not to be hoarded there,
But for the sweetening of the common air.

Because it breathes in and exhales God's breath,
Its natural atmosphere, and so grows strong
To root itself amid decay and death,
And lift its head above the poisonous Wrong,
And, with her far-reaching fibres, push apart
The noisome evils clutching at Earth's heart.

It is not sweet, but bitter, sad, and vain,
Living in shows of what we are or do;
The after-taste of selfishness is pain:
In hearts that grovel, hope must grovel, too
Ever our petty falsehoods deathward tend,
Leave us defeated, cheated of life's end.

It is not sweet to compass our low aim,
And sicken of it; nor to trail the wing
In dust, whereon eternal dawn should flame.
Even love, sin-touched, is an unwholesome thing,
A growth reversed, blight clinging into blight;
Love, meant to hallow all things with its light.

To live! to find our life in nobler lives,
Baptized with them in dews of holiness;
Strengthened, upraised, by every soul that thrives
In the clear air of perfect righteousness,
And sheltering that which might for frailty die,
When, with hot feet, the whirlwind rushes by!

Oh, sweet to live, to love, and to aspire!
To know that whatsoever we attain,
Beyond the utmost summit of desire,
Heights upon heights eternally remain,
To humble us, to lift us up, to show
Into what luminous deeps we onward go.

Because the Perfect, evermore postponed,
Yet ever beckoning, is our only goal;
Because the deathless Love that sits enthroned
On changeless Truth, holds us in firm control;
Because within God's Heart our pulses beat;
Because His Law is holy, life is sweet!

Because it is of Him, His infinite gift;
Lost, but restored by One who came to share
His riches with our poverty, and lift
The human to the heavenly, everywhere;
Because in Christ we breathe immortal breath,
Sweet sweet is life! He hath abolished death!

THE TRUE WITNESS.

DEAR friend, I heard thee say to me,
"Christ is a dream:
The fiction of thy heart is He,
Its self-lit gleam."

In vain I tried to think the thought:
Life so bereft,
So empty, fancy pictured not;
Nothing was left;

Scarcely the earth whereon I stood;
A star grown dim:
Earth, its Creator made so good,
So full of Him!

For all truth in humanity
With Him is one;
Through His dear children God I see,
Father through Son.

Thine own pure life — thought, word, and deed,
A holy flame —
In lines of light that all may read,
Writes out His name.

No loving voice, however weak,
But echoes His;
Dear friend, because I hear thee speak,
I know He is!

DAILY BREAD.

WHAT is the daily bread,
  Father, we ask of Thee, —
We, who must still be fed
  Out of Thy bounty free?

Not at the household board
  Is our deep want supplied:
Bins may be amply stored,
  And souls unsatisfied.

For not by bread alone
  Can we, Thy children, live:
Some heavenly food unknown
  Thou unto us must give.

We ask not meat to nurse
  Ambition's vain desire,
Nor greed of gain, the curse
  Of inward cankering fire;

Nor the poor, tasteless husks
  That swine have torn and trod
And ground with beastly tusks:
  Let clod be given to clod!

Nurtured we all must be
  By Thy sweet Word alone:
Asking this bread of Thee,
  Thou wilt not give a stone.

Thy Life, O God! Thy Word,
  Outspoken through Thy Son!
In Him our prayer is heard,
  Our heart's desire is won.

To sacrifice, to share,
  To give, even as He gave;
For others' wants to care;
  Not our own lives to save;

With love for all around
  Our days and hours to fill:
Thus be it ever found
  Our meat to do Thy will!

This is the living bread
  Which cometh down from Heaven,
Wherewith our souls are fed;
  The pure, immortal leaven.

The hidden manna this,
Whereof who eateth, he
Grows up in perfectness
Of Christ-like symmetry.

Who seeks this bread shall be
Nor stinted, nor denied:
Our hungry souls in Thee,
O Christ, are satisfied!

MY CUP RUNNETH OVER.

WHEREFORE drink with me, friends! It is no draught
Of red intoxication; at its brim
No vine-wreathed head of Bacchus ever laughed, —
This homely cup of mine, now worn and dim
With time's rough usage; no bright bubbles swim,
Or foam-beads sparkle over. — Have ye quaffed
These waters clear, and felt the Shepherd waft
His breath of life through souls that follow Him?
He cools my feverish fancies; calms the stir
Of dreams whose end was only bitterness.
Healed at this fount our inmost ail would be,
Did we but health before disease prefer.
My cup is filled at wells whose blessedness
A world's thirst cannot drain. Friends, drink with me!

OUR CHRIST.

IN Christ I feel the heart of God
Throbbing from heaven through earth;
Life stirs again within the clod;
Renewed in beauteous birth,
The soul springs up, a flower of prayer,
Breathing His breath out on the air.

In Christ I touch the hand of God,
From His pure height reached down,
By blessed ways before untrod,
To lift us to our crown;
Victory that only perfect is
Through loving sacrifice, like His.

Holding His hand, my steadied feet
May walk the air, the seas;
On life and death His smile falls sweet,
Lights up all mysteries:

Stranger nor exile can I be
In new worlds where He leadeth me.

Not my Christ only; He is ours;
Humanity's close bond;
Key to its vast, unopened powers,
Dream of our dreams beyond.
What yet we shall be none can tell:
Now are we His, and all is well.

THE LADDER OF ANGELS.

When Jacob slept in Bethel, and there dreamed
Of angels ever climbing and descending
A ladder, whose last height of splendor seemed
With glory of the Ineffable Presence blending,
The place grew sacred to his reverent thought:
He said, "Lo! God is here. I knew it not."

And wherefore did they fold their wings of light,
Of swiftness, and of strength, those beings holy,
And up to dawn celestial, through earth's night,
Like mortals, step by step, go toiling slowly?
Was it to teach themselves the painful way
Man's feet must take to their familiar day?

Or was it that the traveler, laid asleep
On his stone pillow, with an inward seeing,
Should learn how mightiest spirits reach the steep
And glorious possibilities of being?
Not by a visionary flight sublime,
But up the foot-worn ladder-rounds of time.

Foretold they His descent, the Son of God,
Who humbly clothed Himself in vestments mortal,
And so, encumbered with our weakness, trod
With us the stairway to His Father's portal;
To life whose inner secret none can win
Save by surmounting earthliness and sin?

The patriarch's vision, — not for him alone
Lighted that golden mystery his slumber;
Beneath it slept a world of souls unknown:
When God sets up a sign, no man may number
Its meanings infinite. Who runneth reads,
And finds the interpretation that he needs.

Wherever upward, even the lowest round,
Man by a hand's help lifts his feebler brother,

There is the house of God and holy ground:
The gate of heaven is Love; there is none other.
When generous act blooms from unselfish thought,
The Lord is with us, though we know it not.

This ladder is let down in every place
Where unto nobler virtues men aspire;
Our human lineaments gain angel grace,
Leaving behind low aim and base desire:
Deserts of earth are changed to Bethel thus;
The vision is for every one of us.

WINTER MIDNIGHT.

SPEAK to us out of midnight's heart,
Thou who forever sleepless art!
The thoughts of Night are still and deep;
She doth Thy holiest secrets keep.

The voices of the Day perplex;
Her crossing lights mislead and vex:
We trust ourselves to find Thy way,
Or, proudly free, prefer to stray.

The Night brings dewfall, still and sweet;
Soft shadows fold us to Thy feet;
Thy whisper in the dark we hear:
"Soul, cling to Me! none else is near."

Speak to us by white winter's breath,
Thou Life behind the mask of death,
That makest the snowfall eloquent
As summer's stir in earth's green tent!

Close unto Winter's quiet breast,
Summer, a sleeping babe, is pressed:
Till waking-time she safe will hold
His bloom and freshness manifold.

O Night and Winter! cold and gloom!
O marble mystery of the tomb!
God's hieroglyphs to man are ye;
Sealed visions of what yet shall be.

Better is blessedness concealed
From sight, than joy to sense revealed.
Thanks for this happy mortal breath!
Praise for the life wrapped up in death!

SEA-SIDE HYMN.

Into the ocean of Thy peace,
Almighty One, my thoughts would flow;
Bid their unrestful murmuring cease,
And Thy great calmness let me know!

The world is bright and glad in Thee!
No hopeless gloom her face enshrouds;
Joy lights her mountains, thrills her sea,
And weaves gay tints through all her clouds.

The shadow, Father, is our own,
That sends across our path a stain,
The discord is in us alone,
That makes the echoing earth complain.

O God, how beautiful is life,
Since Thou its soul and sweetness art!
How dies its childish fret and strife
On thy all-harmonizing heart!

Leaving behind me dust and clay,
From selfish hindrances set free,
I find at last my broadening way
Unto my ocean-rest in Thee.

One soul with Thee forevermore,
Borne high beyond the gulfs of death,—
A joy that ripples on Thy shore,—
With Life's vast hymn I blend my breath.

DRAWING NEARER.

Are we daily drawing nearer
Thee, the Perfect, the Unseen?
Grows the pathway ever clearer,
Stretching sense and God between?
Thine own messengers beside us
Wait, wherever we may be;
Earth and heaven are met, to guide us
Nearer unto Thee.

In the web of beauty's weaving,
In the picture and the song;
In our dreaming and believing,
By our friendships borne along;

By our own heart's human story,
By the light on land and sea,
Glimpsing unimagined glory,
Draw we nearer Thee?

In our doings and ambitions,
Heaping gold and probing thought;
In crude science, worn traditions,
Finds the spirit what it sought?
In the tumult of the nations,
Surging like a shoreward sea,
Are Thy sundered congregations
Gathering unto Thee?

With the footsteps of the ages,
Are we drawing nearer Thee?
Beautiful upon Time's pages
Will our name and record be?
Year on year of worthier living
Add we to life's glorious sum? —
Through our failures, Thy forgiving,
Lord, Thy kingdom come!

Over fallen towers of error,
Laid by our own hands in dust;
Past the ghosts of doubt and terror;
Out of sloth's in-eating rust;
From Gomorrah's lurid smouldering,
Borders of the drear Dead Sea;
Graves where selfish loves lie mouldering,
Fly we unto Thee.

Vain a secret hoard to carry
From our ruined house of pride;
Weights that hinder, fiends that harry,
Are the idols that we hide.
Draw us rather by the sweetness
Of Thy breath in living things
To Thyself, with unclogged fleetness,
Lifted, as on wings!

Dogmas into truth transmuting,
Fusing differences in love;
Creed and rite no more disputing,
Closing rank and file we move;
Leaving our dead Past behind us,
Turning not, nor looking back:
May no wayside glimmer blind us
To the one straight track!

Brother hastening unto brother,
Youth rewakening in our eyes,

Loving Thee and one another,
Find we our lost Paradise.
Where the heart is, there the treasure;
Led by paths we cannot see
Unto heights no guess can measure,
Draw we nearer Thee!

Nearer Thee, through every æon,
Every universe of Thine!
Man and seraph swell one pæan,
Harmonizing chords divine.
Thine from Thee no power can sever;
Through death's veil Thy face they see;
Saved, forever and forever
Drawing nearer Thee!

HIS BIRTHDAY.

It is His birthday — His, the Holy Child!
And innocent childhood blossoms now anew,
Under the dropping of celestial dew
Into its heart, out of this heavenlier Flower,
That penetrates the lowliest roof-tree bower
With fragrance of an Eden undefiled:
O happy children, praise Him in your mirth, —
The Son of God born with you on the earth!

It is His birthday — His, in whom our youth
Becomes immortal. Nothing good, or sweet,
Or beautiful, or needful to complete
The being that He shares, shall suffer blight;
All that in us His Father can delight,
He saves, He makes eternal as His truth.
Praise Him for one another, loyal friends!
The friendship He awakens, never ends.

It is His birthday — and this world of ours
Is a new earth, since He hath dwelt therein;
Is even as heaven, since One Life without sin
Made it a home. His voice is in the air;
His face looks forth from beauty everywhere;
His breath is sweetness at the soul of flowers;
And in Him — joy beyond all joy of these —
Man wakes to glorious possibilities.

It is His birthday — and our birthday, too!
Humanity was one long dream of Him,
Until He came: with fitful glow, and dim,
The altars heavenward smoked from vague desire,
Despair half stifling aspiration's fire.

He is man's lost ideal, shining through
This life of ours, whereinto floweth His,—
God, interblent with human destinies.

It is His birthday — His, the only One
Who ever made life's meaning wholly plain;
Dawn is He to our night! No longer vain
And purposeless our onward-struggling years;
The hope He bringeth overfloods our fears:
Now do we know the Father, through the Son!
O earth, O heart, be glad on this glad morn!
God is with man! Life, Life to us is born!

DOOR AND KEEPER.

THE corridors of Time
Are full of doors, — the portals of closed years;
We enter them no more, though bitter tears
Beat hard against them, and we hear the chime
Of lost dreams, dirge-like, in behind them ring
At Memory's opening.

But one door stands ajar, —
The New Year's; while a golden chain of days
Holds it half shut. The eager foot delays
That presses toward its threshold's mighty bar;
And fears that shrink, and hopes that shout aloud,
Around it wait and crowd.

It shuts back the Unknown:
And dare we truly welcome one more year,
Who down the past a mocking laughter hear
From idle aims like wandering breezes blown?
We, whose large aspirations dimmed and shrank,
Till the year's scroll was blank?

We pause beside this door.
Thy year, O God, how shall we enter in?
How shall we thence Thy hidden treasures win?
Shall we return in beggary, as before,
When Thou art near at hand, with infinite wealth,
Wisdom, and heavenly health?

The footsteps of a Child
Sound close beside us. Listen! He will speak!
His birthday bells have hardly rung a week,
Yet has He trod the world's press undefiled:
"Come with me!" hear him through his smiling say.
"Behold, I am the Way!"

Against the door His face
Shines as the sun; His touch is a command;
The years unfold before His baby hand;
The beauty of His presence fills all space.
"Enter through me," He saith, "nor wander more;
For lo! I am the Door."

And all doors openeth He,
The new-born Christ, the Lord of the New Year,
The threshold of our locked hearts standeth near;
And while He gives us back love's rusted key,
Our Future on us with His eyes has smiled
Even as a little child.

THY KINGDOM COME.

SOMETIMES a vision comes to me
Of what Thy world was meant to be;
Thy beauty all things shining through,
Thy love in all the works we do.

I shade my spirit's dazzled sight
Before the splendor of that light:
Earth crowned with heaven's pure diadem,
The Bride, the new Jerusalem!

For this alone didst Thou descend,
O Son of God, man's glorious Friend,
From Thy dear Father's throne of bliss:—
That human life might be as His.

Thy Kingdom come, our souls within!
Where Thou art, is no room for sin:
Oh, show us what our lives may be,
Led home to Him, by following Thee!

IMMORTAL YEARS.

THEY come, they linger with us, and they go—
The lovely years!
Into our hearts we feel their beauty grow;
Through them the meaning of our life we know,
Its joys, its fears.

They whom God sent us, robed in sacred light,
Out of His sky,

With snow and roses, stars and sunbeams bright, —
Too beautiful they must be in His sight,
Ever to die.

Though down the long, dim avenues of the Past
Their swift feet fled,
In His eternity the rooms are vast;
There wait they, to be ours again at last:
They are not dead.

Are they not in immortal friendship ours,
Always our own?
Never in vain bloomed one of their sweet flowers,
Whose rose-breath up through blessèd Eden bowers
Climbed to His throne.

Immortal by their sadness, in our thought
That lingers yet;
Their gracious rainbow-smiles, with clouds inwrought;
Their gentleness, that from our errors caught
Shadowy regret.

Immortal by their kind austerities
Of storm and frost,
That drove us from our palaces of lies, —
Baseless, unsheltering splendors, that arise
At a soul's cost.

The immortal years, — they are a part of us,
Our life, our breath:
Their sorrows in our eyes hang tremulous;
Ours in a union tender, glorious,
Stronger than death.

Poorer or richer, with us they remain
As our own soul;
None shall divorce us from our mutual pain,
Nothing shall take away our common gain,
While ages roll.

Out of the years bloom the eternities:
From earth-clogged root
Life climbs through leaf and bud, by slow degrees
Till some far cycle heavenly blossom sees,
And perfect fruit.

And nothing dies that ever was alive;
All that endears
And sanctifies the human must survive:
Of God they are, and in His smile they thrive;
The immortal years!

FORETASTE.

How do I know that after this
Another life there is?
Another life? There is but one!
In mystery begun,
Continued in a miracle, God's breath,
The living soul, spells not the name of death.

How know I that I am alive?
So only as I thrive
On truth, whose sweetness keeps the soul
Vigorous and pure and whole:
Heaven's health within is immortality;
The life that is, and evermore shall be.

To grasp the Hereafter is not mine;
And yet a Voice divine
Hath, page by page, interpreted
Time's book, while I have read:
And, as my heart in wisdom shall unfold,
Secrets of unseen heavens shall I be told.

To Thy Beyond no fear I give;
Because Thou livest, I live,
Unsleeping Friend! Why should I wake,
Troublesome thought to take
For any strange to-morrow? In Thy hand,
Days and eternities like flowers expand.

Odors from blossoming worlds unknown
Across my path are blown;
Thy robes trail hither myrrh and spice
From farthest paradise;
I walk through Thy fair universe with Thee,
And sun me in Thine immortality.

YET ONWARD.

I THANK Thee, Lord, for precious things
Which Thou into my life hast brought;
More gratefully my spirit sings
Its thanks for all I yet have not.

How fair Thy world to me has been!
How dear the friends who breathe its air!
But who can guess what waits within
Thine opening realms, Thy worlds more fair?

That which I had has slipped away,
  Lost in the abysses of the Past;
By that I lack am I to-day
  Heir of Thine undawned æons vast.

The best things joy to me has brought
  Have been its sigh of yearning pain;
Its dreams of bliss ungauged by thought;
  Its dear despairs, which yet remain.

If Thou Thyself at once couldest give,
  Then wert Thou not the God Thou art.
To explore Thy secret is to live,
  Creation's inexhaustible Heart!

To some Thou givest at ease to lie,
  Content in anchored happiness:
Thy breath my full sail swelling, I
  Across thy broadening seas would press!

Dear voyagers, though each nearing oar
  Around is music to my ear,
Sweeter to hear, far on before,
  Some swifter boatman call, "Good cheer!"

At friendly shores, at peaceful isles,
  I touch, but may not long delay;
Where Thy flushed East with mystery smiles
  I steer into the unrisen day.

For veils of hope before Thee drawn,
  For mists that hint the immortal coast
Hid in Thy farthest, faintest dawn,—
  My God, for these I thank Thee most.

Joy, joy! to see, from every shore
  Whereon my step makes pressure fond,
Thy sunrise reddening still before!
  More light, more love, more life beyond!

LATER POEMS.

IN THE WORLD WITH YOU.

When the first red streak of the dawn has come,
I listen, awake, for the city's hum,
A faint little threadlet of far-off sound,
Growing ever confused, like a skein unwound
By heedless fingers, wherein I hear
The voices of myriad work-folk dear,
Who make earth the sheltering home that it is,
With their beautiful, manifold industries;
And I meet them, and call to them, one by one
Passing into the light of a day begun:
"Thank God for the work that He lets us do!
I am glad that I live in the world with you!"

When the Sabbath morning its holier spell
On the landscape lays, and the distant bell
Answering to bell through the peaceful air
Leaves resonant melody lingering there,
I think of a shrine where I fain would be,
Where reverent worshipers bend the knee
In the presence of One whom they love, unseen;
And I murmur, "To you with my heart I lean,
And I feel the throb of your music here,
Pulsing into the heaven that is so near,
We may know if our souls to its song ring true.
I am glad that I live in the world with you!"

And to all the sweetness and all the mirth
That stir in the bosom of kindly Earth;
To the flower in the field, and the bird on the bough,
And the seed springing up in the track of the plough;
To the sweeping storm, to the mist and the rain,
And the sunshine that always returns again;
To the laugh of childhood, to friendship's call,
To the faithful around us, who help us all;
To the love and the loveliness everywhere —
A Presence I feel, and a blessing I share —
I sing, and the song is forever new,
"I am glad that I live in the world with you!"

The good that we work for is hard to win;
  But our labor and worship are woven in
To one marvelous web with the beauty we see
  Unfolding from blossom and star and tree,
That widens, and lengthens, and stretches above,
  Out into the deeps of Invisible Love.
O spirits dear, who have vanished from sight,
  You are only hid in a splendor of light
That is as the dazzling soul of the sun!
  There are many mansions, the home is one,
And the doors are open, the light shines through!—
  I am glad that I live in the world with you!

THE TREES.

TIME is never wasted, listening to the trees;
If to heaven as grandly we arose as these,
Holding toward each other half their kindly grace,
Haply we were worthier of our human place.

Bending down to meet you on the hillside path,
Birch and oak and maple each his welcome hath;
Each his own fine cadence, his familiar word,
By the ear accustomed, always plainly heard.

Every tree gives answer to some different mood:
This one helps you, climbing; that for rest is good:
Beckoning friends, companions, sentinels, they are;
Good to live and die with, good to greet afar.

Take a poet with you when you seek their shade,—
One whose verse like music in a tree is made;
Yet your mind will wander from his rarest lay,
Lost in rhythmic measures that above you sway.

Leafy light and shadow flit across the book;
Flickering, swift suggestions; word, and thought, and look
Of a subtle Presence writing nobler things
On his open pages, than the poet sings.

They are poets, also; winds that turn their leaves
Waken a responsive tone that laughs or grieves;
As your thoughts within you changefully are stirred,
Prophecy or promise, lilt or hymn, is heard.

Never yet has poet sung a perfect song,
But his life was rooted like a tree's, among
Earth's great feeding forces,—even as crag and mould,
Rhythms that stir the forest by firm fibres hold.

Harmonies ethereal haunt his topmost bough,
Upward from the mortal drawn, he knows not how:
The old, sacred story of celestial birth
Rising from terrestrial; heaven revealed through earth.

Dear, inspiring, friendly dwellers of the wood,
Always reaching downward something grand or good
From the lofty spaces where you breathe and live;
Royally unconscious, careless what you give!

O ye glorious creatures, heirs with us of earth!
Might we win the secret of our loftier birth, —
From our depths of being grow like you, and climb
To our heights of blessing, — life would be sublime!

FLOWERS OF THE FALLOW.

I LIKE these plants that you call weeds, —
  Sedge, hardhack, mullein, yarrow, —
That knit their roots and sift their seeds
Where any grassy wheel-track leads
  Through country by-ways narrow.

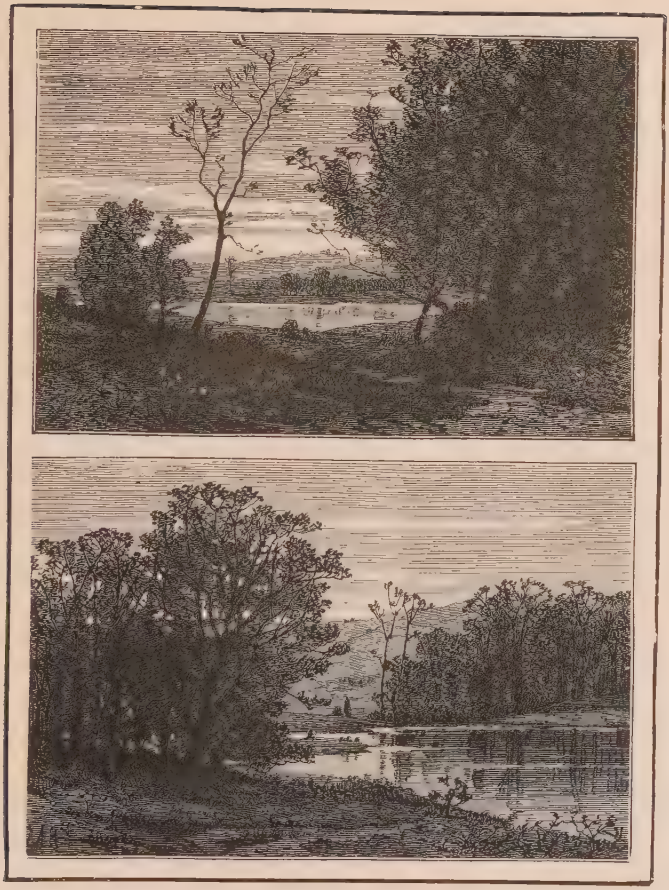
They fringe the rugged hillside farms,
  Grown old with cultivation,
With such wild wealth of rustic charms
As bloomed in Nature's matron arms
  The first days of creation.

They show how Mother Earth loves best
  To deck her tired-out places;
By flowery lips, in hours of rest,
Against hard work she will protest
  With homely airs and graces.

You plough the arbutus from her hills,
  Hew down her mountain-laurel:
Their place, as best she can, she fills
With humbler blossoms; so she wills
  To close with you her quarrel.

She yielded to your axe, with pain,
  Her free, primeval glory;
She brought you crops of golden grain:
You say, "How dull she grows! how plain!"
  The old, mean, selfish story!

Her wildwood soil you may subdue,
  Tortured by hoe and harrow;



BY THE RIVER. Page 297

But leave her for a year or two,
And see! she stands and laughs at you
With hardhack, mullein, yarrow!

Dear Earth, the world is hard to please!
Yet heaven's breath gently passes
Into the life of flowers like these;
And I lie down at blessèd ease
Among thy weeds and grasses.

BY THE RIVER.

RIVER, O river, that singest all night,
Nor waitest for light
To pour out thy mirth
Along the chill earth,
The words of thy song let me know!
"I come and I go."

River, O river, with swell and with fall,
Thy musical call
Waketh, summoneth me;
What thought is in thee
That lulls me, yet rouses me so?
"I come and I go."

River, O river, a word thou must give,
To help me to live.
"Then sing on thy way,—
Sing the joy of to-day,—
Time's ripple, eternity's flow!
I come and I go."

River, O river, thy message is clear;
Chant on, for I hear!
"What the mountains give me
Bear I forth to the sea.
Life only is thine to bestow:
I come and I go."

River, O river, thy secret of power
I win from this hour;
Thy rhythm of delight
Is my song in the night:
I am glad with thy gladness; for, lo!
I come and *I* go.

A SONG-SPARROW IN MARCH.

How much do the birds know, afloat in the air,
Of our changeable, strange human life and its care?
Who can tell what they utter,
With carol and flutter,
Of the joy of our hearts, or the pain hidden there?

In the March morning twilight I turned from a bed
Where a soul had just risen from a form lying dead:
The dim world was ringing
With a song-sparrow's singing
That went up and pierced the gray dawn overhead.

It rose like an ecstasy loosed from the earth;
Like a rapture repeating the song of its birth;
In that clear burst of gladness
Night shook off her sadness,
And death itself echoed the heavenly mirth.

While her sorrowful burden the sufferer laid by,
The little bird passed, and caught up to the sky,
And sang to gray meadow
And mist-wreath and shadow
The triumph a mortal had found it to die.

Oh, the birds cannot tell what it is that they sing!
But to me must the song-sparrow's melody bring,
Whenever I hear it,
The joy of a spirit
Released into life on that dim dawn of spring.

ORION.

Orion, with his glittering belt and sword
Girded since time has been, while time shall be,
Looks through my window nightly upon me,
My day's work done, its weary conquests scored,
Its wearier failures bitterly deplored.
Thou splendid, soulless warrior! what to thee,
Marching along thy bloodless fields, are we,
Who hardly can a breathing-space afford,
Between the routed and the advancing foe?
Yet ours is glory that outdazzles thine:
Not before thee will we ourselves abase.
Thy stars but pave the road whereon we go,
Assured, by our alliances divine,
Of conquering yet the world, and time, and space.

CLIMBING TO REST.

STILL must I climb, if I would rest:
The bird soars upward to his nest;
The young leaf on the tree-top high
Cradles itself within the sky.

The streams, that seem to hasten down,
Return in clouds, the hills to crown;
The plant arises from her root,
To rock aloft her flower and fruit.

I cannot in the valley stay:
The great horizons stretch away!
The very cliffs that wall me round
Are ladders unto higher ground.

To work — to rest — for each a time;
I toil, but I must also climb.
What soul was ever quite at ease
Shut in by earthly boundaries?

I am not glad till I have known
Life that can lift me from my own:
A loftier level must be won,
A mightier strength to lean upon.

And heaven draws near as I ascend;
The breeze invites, the stars befriend:
All things are beckoning toward the Best:
I climb to thee, my God, for rest!

MOUNT MORIAH FROM BETHEL.

THE mountains, gazed at from afar,
Take shape of our imaginings;
Outspread beyond this valley are
A lifted pair of purple wings,
That bear my thoughts away, away,
I know not whither, day by day.

Behind them, two gray pyramids
Cut sharp and deep the western sky,
With one pale summit, that forbids
His brother peaks to climb too high,
Because he will have mate nor peer
His lonely tryst with heaven to hear.

These are the heights that crown the land;
  Step after step, their slopes descend
Out of the clouds, a stairway grand,
  Until with common earth they blend,
Where the broad meadow spreads before
Their bases, like an emerald floor.

The men who tilled these fields of old,
  Called the place Bethel: well might seem
That mountain stairway to unfold
  The ladder set in Jacob's dream;
And the wide pinions outlined there,
An angel's, winnowing the air.

The farther summits proudly oft
  Retreat in clouds, and mist, and rain,
Leaving those great wings poised aloft:
  Forward they bend, with steadfast strain,
As if to bear on through the sky
Some burden of glad mystery.

And sometimes of their shape is left
  Only one vigorous, broken line,
Half hidden by a vapory weft;
  The dim sketch of a grand design,
Whose veiled proportions still suggest
Motion and strength, upheld in rest.

My fancy often paints a Face,
  Benign with majesty and light,
Looking out midway through the space
  Where the wings part for onward flight:
Oh, wondrous beyond mortal guess
Is that elusive loveliness!

Yet vainly imagery of mine
  Dreams its faint picture of the Love
That hovers, with a warmth divine,
  These human lives of ours above,
And from the hardships of our lot
Uplifts us, when we know it not.

Out of the very ground we tread
  Visions of heavenly hope arise.
God made the earth; it is not dead;
  It shares the glory of the skies:
Look! even in vague, half-shapen things
A soul is struggling up for wings!

BETHEL, ME., September, 1881.

"They bear me down to yon abysmal deep." Page 301.

THE SUMMIT-FLOWER.

ALPINE SANDWORT.

Too close these giant hills their heads uprear;
From peak to base the unswerving outlines sweep
In awful curves; I follow them with fear:
They bear me down to yon abysmal deep,
Where storm-wind and black cloud for mastery fight,
And toss me, as their plaything, on the air;
The mountains crush me with their savage might;
Nature's rude strength is more than I can bear.

O little white flower on the summit born,
How tenderly you look into my eyes!
Not for a moment do you feel forlorn
Among these grandeurs and immensities.
Vague, formless forces they; a life are you!
My next of kin, and dear as near to me,
You whisper in my ear a promise true,
A faint, clear hint of immortality.

I touch your leaf with reverence, little flower!
I think of spiritual heights beyond your ken,
Where mightier movements of invisible power
Mould into God-like grace the lives of men.
I gather courage, while I watch you here,
Winning from elements fierce your happy breath,
To root my hopes in mystery and fear,
And find my life in that which seems my death.

MOUNT WASHINGTON, N. H., August, 1882.

LOOKING DOWN.

DEAR World, looking down from the highest of heights that my feet can attain,
I see not the smoke of your cities, the dust of your highway and plain;
Over all your dull moors and morasses a veil the blue atmosphere folds,
And you might be made wholly of mountains, for aught that my vision beholds.

Dear World, I look down and am grateful that so we all sometimes may stand
Above our own every-day level,and know that our nature is grand
In its possible glory of climbing; in the hill-tops that beckon and bend
So close over every mortal, he scarcely can choose but ascend.

Dear World, on the peak we miss something, — the sweet multitudinous sound
Of leaves in the forest a-flutter, of rivulets lisping around;
The smell of wild pastures in blossom, of fresh earth upturned by the plough; —
But the fields and the woods led us hither; half-way they are following now!

One world — there is no separation — the same earth above and below;
Up here is the river's cloud-cradle, down there is its fullness and flow.
My voice joins the voice of your millions who upward in weariness grope,
And the hills bear the burden to heaven, — humanity's anguish and hope!

Dear World, lying quiet and lovely, in a shimmer of gossamer haze,
Beneath the soft films of your mantle I can feel your heart beat, as I gaze.
I know you by what you aspire to; by the look that on no face can be,
Save in moments of high consecration: you are showing your true self to me.

Dear World, I behold but your largeness; I forget that aught evil or mean
Ever marred the vast sphere of your beauty, over which as a lover I lean.
And not by our flaws will God judge us; His love keeps our noblest in sight:
Dear World, our low life sinks behind us; we look up to His infinite height!

VALLEY AND PEAK.

The Valley said to the Peak,
"O Peak, I fain would arise
And be great like you! I would seek
The wealth that illumes your skies!
Although I lie so low
At your feet, I aspire to share
The splendor and strength you know,
Lifted up into spacious air."

The Peak to the Valley said,
"O Valley, be content,
Since for you my veins have bled,
And for you my breath is spent!
Alone, for your sake, I live
In the cold and cloudy blue;
Great only in that I give
The riches of heaven to you."

A MOUNTAIN BRIDAL.

TARN TO BROOKLET.

I WAS a tarn on the mountain-side·
Misty and chill,
Over the hill,
Over and under the pine-woods wide,
Heard I the wandering wind
Moaning, as one who could never find
A place where he might abide.

I was alone in my hollow glen;
Sunset's red gleam,
The moon's pallid beam,
The cry of the beast from his unknown den, —
They haunted the lonesome wood,
Only to deepen its solitude:
Was I alive, love, then?

Once, in a darkling dream, I heard —
Oh, to know where! —
High in the air,
Something that sang to me, thrilled in me, stirred
Life that I knew not was mine;
A ripple of melody, dim and divine,
A far-off, familiar word.

Once, in a noonday trance, I saw
A glimmer of white,
A wonder of light,
A radiance of crystal without a flaw,
Shining through moss and fern,
Glimpsing and hiding, with many a turn,
Yet coming, by some sweet law;

Coming to me, O my brooklet-bride!
Yes, it was thou,
Life of me now!
Coming, with grace of a sunbeam, to glide
Into my soul's shadow deep:
Waked by thy laughter from sloth and from sleep,
Thee must I follow, my guide!

Mine, O my blessing, my mountain-born!
Out of the glen,
Down among men,
Winsomely leading me forth, like the morn;
Heaven on thy musical lip,
Fresh from the wells where the holy stars dip,
Rousing me up from self-scorn.

Still, at our tryst on the mountain-side,
Something we keep
Hidden too deep
Ever to whisper through earth so wide;
Love that we dimly know
Leaves the world fresher wherever we go,
One to the end, O my bride!

HILLS IN MIST.

FAMILIAR is the scene, yet strange:
Field, roadside, tree, and stream,
Fringed with a blur of misty change,—
The landscape of a dream!

The hills are gone; the river winds
Under a fleecy bank:
The eye, through all its wandering, finds
Both earth and heaven a blank.

The picture tells a tale untrue:
Where muffling mists descend,
Where level meadows bound the view,
The horizon does not end.

For, glimpsed beyond the spectral trees,
Faint, penciled peaks appear;
And in this fresh, inspiring breeze
We know the mountains near.

— O Country all reality,
Hidden from mortal sight
By baffling folds of mystery,
Show our tired souls thy light!

O Breath from hills invisible,
Flow through the films of doubt,
That we, who here as pilgrims dwell,
Feel not from home shut out!

Or help us, when the stifling cloud
Closes on our despair,
By faith to pierce its deathly shroud,
And know that heaven is there!

THE LILY OF THE RESURRECTION.

WHILE the lily dwells in earth,
Walled about with crumbling mould,
She the secret of her birth
Guesses not, nor has been told.

Hides the brown bulb in the ground,
Knowing not she is a flower;
Knowing not she shall be crowned
As a queen, with white-robed power.

Though her whole life is one thrill
Upward, unto skies unseen,
In her husks she wraps her still,
Wondering what her visions mean.

Shivering, while the bursting scales
Leave her heart bare, with a sigh
She her unclad state bewails,
Whispering to herself, "I die."

Die? Then may she welcome death,
Leaving darkness underground,
Breathing out her sweet, free breath
Into the new heavens around.

Die? She bathes in ether warm:
Beautiful without, within,
See at last the imprisoned form
All its fair proportions win!

Life it means, this impulse high
Which through every rootlet stirs:
Lo! the sunshine and the sky
She was made for, now are hers!

Soul, thou too art set in earth,
Heavenward through the dark to grow:
Dreamest thou of thy royal birth?
Climb! and thou shalt surely know.

Shuddering Doubt to Nature cries, —
Nature, though she smiles, is dumb, —
"How then can the dead arise?
With what body do they come?"

Lo, the unfolding mystery!
We shall bloom, some wondrous hour,
As the lily blooms, when she
Dies a bulb, to live a flower!

MISREAD.

You praised her for her truth one day;
But I, who knew her best, can say
That to herself her words seemed still
To mock the meaning of her will.
An arrow striking somewhat near
Its mark, is speech, when most sincere;
And, as her heart itself, I knew
She did but aim at being true.

Less easily could she endure
What once you breathed, — "She is so pure!"
The earthliness of earth is such,
We soil the dearest hands we touch.
Dust clogs and stains the whitest wings,
Sin cleaves even to our holiest things;
None taintless is; yet am I sure
Her inmost prayer was, to be pure.

But when "So good!" you said of her,
What saddening memories did you stir
Of shipwrecked possibilities,
Vessels becalmed on stagnant seas, —
Seeds of all virtues idly sown,
And left untended and unblown!
— Well of herself she understood
How fitfully she strove towards good.

Ah, pitiful indeed is praise
To one who lives beneath the gaze
Of conscience, feels the All-Seeing Eye
Through utterance, deed, and motive pry!
Painful enough the word of blame
Answered by acquiescent shame!
Who knows himself can nothing boast;
But they who praise us pain us most!

IN THE STREET.

Walking among the crowd, where faces shift
As in a great kaleidoscope, — some bright
With pleasure's gleam of evanescent light,
Some dull with vague despairs, some that uplift
The radiance of a vision ere they fade
And vanish, — as confusedly they pass,
We question of ourselves, "This common mass
Of human life, to what end was it made?"

But think! No jewel out of setting shows
As in its own fit nook. So let us learn
To look upon these various lives, that turn
To one illumining Centre. Lo! each glows
In the full brotherhood of Christ's dear face,
And is, by that relationship divine —
The bond that glorifies your life and mine —
Forever lifted out of commonplace!

BEAUTY EVER NEAR.

O YE who toil alone in shadowy places,
The light is beautiful on your sad faces,
When souls that dwell in sunshine, toward you pressing,
Make your eyes glisten with a rainbow-blessing!
Through deepening darkness let this memory cheer you:
That lovely lives are always drawing near you.

Sometimes you see them not; a bright veil hideth
The brighter realm wherein their love abideth.
We call them angels then; not less they linger,
Lifting your heavy gloom with luminous finger,
The loftiest ever seeking the most lowly;
Your friends, the strong, the beautiful, the holy!

Look! radiant foreheads out of heaven are bending!
All earth is Bethel, angels still descending!
And though dread names of mystery they borrow —
Care, Poverty, Bereavement, Pain, and Sorrow —
Fear them not; wait and see the brightness, rather,
They shine with, in the presence of your Father!

Lo! robed in glory tongue nor pen hath painted,
The Man of Sorrows, with your grief acquainted,
Is drawing nearer, Spirit unto spirit!
His voice is music; lift your heads and hear it!
The Infinite Beauty to Himself would win you;
God's Well-Beloved comes to dwell within you!

ABANDONED.

THEY look, and pass thee by,
Fallen, wounded, on the lower steps of life,
Not worth the lifting up, the leading in
Out of the deadly air, the crush, the strife;
Deemed all too foul with sin
For clean hands' touch, for clean feet to draw nigh.

And yet thou art God's child,
My sister lost, and Christ's lost sister, too.
Is any clean like Him, — like Him, who gave
His heart's help unto such, in friendship true?
Ay, He alone could save,
Because He was the only Undefiled.

Wide open is the door
Above life's lofty steps, and there stands He:
Nay, He descends, the purest of the pure;
Looks with thine eyes, appeals to us through thee;
Asks, "Are ye then my friends?
Whom I have loved, 'abandoned' name no more!"

Sister, Christ's little one, —
For such are all the weak, while the self-strong
Shut themselves out from His sweet help and heaven, —
Him hast thou hurt most deeply by thy wrong!
But, since He hath forgiven,
Thou mayest meet any eye; thy heaven is won!

THEE ONLY.

If now anew the search were to be made
For One to guide me onward through the gloom
Of this dim world wherein I walk afraid;
If, like a child left in an empty room,
Homesick, alone, the silence like a tomb,
I went forth weeping, and should hear one say,
"Here, child!" another, "Yonder is the way!"
Another, "Come with me! why care with whom?" —
I do not think I could mistake Thy call
Among ten thousand. Toward Thy voice I grope,
Brother, Friend, Lord! although with many a fall,
And sore bewilderment, and baffled hope.
My needy soul, if ignorant of Thee,
Would prophesy Thy coming. Thou must be!

IN WHOM WE LIVE.

O Infinite of joy and light
Wherewith we are surrounded,
We lift our spirits to Thy height,
Unfathomed and unbounded.
Thy greatness drowns our petty cares;
Thy heaven is in us, unawares.

O Infinite of righteousness,
Breath of our inmost being!
Thy purity will cleanse and bless
The soul from evil fleeing:
We hide our sin-stained hearts in Thee,
And pray, "As Thou art, let us be!"

O Infinitely Loving One!
Redeemer, Guide, and Brother!
By Thee, the warm, revealing Sun,
We see and love each other;
With thy deep Life our lives we blend,
And find ourselves in Thee, our Friend!

THE INMOST ONE.

How near to me, my God, Thou art!
Felt in the throbbing of my heart,
Nearer than my own thoughts to me:
Nothing is real, without Thee!

Thy perfect light makes morning fair,
Thy breath is freshness in the air;
The glory Thou of star and sun,
Thou Souls of souls, Thou Inmost One!

With feverish restlessness and pain
We strive to shut Thee out, in vain;
To darkened heart and rebel will
Thou art the one clear Dayspring still.

Eyes art Thou unto us, the blind;
We turn to Thee, ourselves to find;
We set ajar no door of prayer
But Thou art waiting entrance there.

Within me, — nearer far than near, —
Through every thought Thy voice I hear:
My whole life welcomes Thy control,
Immanuel! God within my soul!

Thou fillest my being's hidden springs,
Thou givest my wishes heavenward wings;
I live Thy life, I breathe Thy breath;
Nor part nor lot have I with death.

TRANSFIGURED.

How changed in an instant! What was it?
A word, or the glance of an eye,
Or a thought flashed from spirit to spirit,
As the rush of the world swept by?

I cannot tell how, yet I know it, —
That once unto me it was given,
'Mid the noonday stir of the city
To breathe for a moment in heaven.

The heaven that is hidden within us
For a moment was open to me,
And I caught a glimpse of the glory
That perhaps we might always see.

A sudden hush in the tumult,
A misty glimmer of trees,
And a ripple of shaded water, —
Yet oh! so much more than these!

A light and a life whence the freshness,
The color and coolness grew;
A baptism on human faces,
An earth created anew!

It came in the calm of communion
With a soul that had entered in
To the life over self victorious,
Arisen from the grave of sin.

As spirit responds unto spirit
Without the sound of a word,
My heart-strings awoke to vibrations
Of music by sense unheard.

And my soul was aware of a vision
Too brief and too holy to tell:
But I saw that the realm of our longing
Is close to the world where we dwell.

Yes, heaven has come down to meet us;
It hangs in our atmosphere;
Its beautiful, open secret
Is whispered in every ear.

And everywhere, here and always,
If we would but open our eyes,
We should find, through these beaten footpaths,
Our way into Paradise.

We should walk there with one another;
Nor halting, disheartened, wait
To enter a dreamed-of City
By a far-off, shadowy Gate.

Dull earth would be dull no longer,
The clod would sparkle a gem;
And our hands, at their commonest labor,
Would be building Jerusalem.

For the clear, cool river of Eden
Flows fresh through our dusty streets;
We may feel its spray on our foreheads
Amid wearisome noontide heats.

We may share the joy of God's angels
On the errands that He has given;
We may live in a world transfigured,
And sweet with the air of heaven.

WOMAN'S CHRISTMAS.

"For unto us a Child is born."

Not, Mary, unto thee alone,
Though blessèd among women thou:
Not thine, nor yet thy nation's own,
With that large glory on His brow.

Thou bendest in awe above the Child,
The cradled Hope of all the race;
The perfect One, the Undefiled,
A saved world shining in His face.

Thou bendest in awe; we bend with thee,
Forgetting bygone loneliness.
Our heart's desire fulfilled is He;
Our solitude He comes to bless.

By the close bond of womanhood,
By the prophetic mother-heart,
Forever visioning unshaped good,
Mary, in Him we claim our part.

This baby's Face is as the sun
Upon the dimness of our way;
This child's Arm ours to lean upon
When mortal strength and hope decay.

Our path, erewhile so desolate,
His dear beatitudes adorn;

Earth is a heavenward-opening gate,
  Since unto us this Child is born.

Born unto us, who vainly seek
  The fair ideal of our dreams
Among its mockeries, blurred and weak:
  He crowns the manhood He redeems.

To us, who trust that men will grow
  Grander than thought or guess of ours,
When this pure Life through theirs shall flow,
  This Health divine stir all their powers.

O Hebrew maiden, even to us,
  Thy sisters, scattered over earth,
God sent this Infant glorious,
  This one celestial, human birth.

What were our poor lives worth, if thence
  Flowered forth no world-perfuming good,
No love-growth of Omnipotence?
  The childless share thy motherhood.

All holy thoughts, all prayer and praise,
  Wherewith our Christ hath made life sweet,
Through us undying voices raise,
  One Name — His Father's — to repeat.

Breathe, weary women everywhere,
  The freshness of this Heavenly morn!
The blessing that He is, we share;
  For unto us this Child is born!

GLIMPSES.

Life comes to us only by glimpses;
  We see it not yet as a whole,
For the vapor, the cloud, and the shadow
  That over it surging roll;
For the dimness of mortal vision,
  That mingles the false with the true:
Yet its innermost, fathomless meaning
  Is never quite hidden from view.

The hills lift aloft the glad secret;
  It is breathed by the whispering leaves;
The rivers repeat it in music;
  The sea with its harmony heaves;
The secret of that living gospel
  Which freshened the veins of the earth,

When Love, named in heaven the Redeemer,
Was revealed in a human birth.

Life shows us its grandeur by glimpses;
For what is this wondrous To-Day
But a rift in the mist-muffled vastness
Of surrounding eternity?
One law for this hour and far futures;
One light on the distant and near;
The bliss of the boundless hereafter
Pulses into the brief moments here.

The secret of life, — it is giving;
To minister and to serve;
Love's law binds the man to the angel,
And ruin befalls, if we swerve.
There are breadths of celestial horizons
Overhanging the commonest way;
The clod and the star share the glory,
And to breathe is an ecstasy.

Life dawns on us, wakes us, by glimpses;
In heaven there is opened a door: —
That flash lit up vistas eternal;
The dead are the living once more!
To illumine the scroll of creation,
One swift, sudden vision sufficed:
Every riddle of life worth the reading
Has found its interpreter — Christ!

WORK IN HEAVEN.

SURELY there must be work to do in heaven,
Since work is the best thing on earth we know:
Life were but tasteless bread without this leaven,
A draught from some dead river's overflow.

What is it we look forward to with longing,
In the hereafter? Couches, banquets, rest?
All our old pleasures round about us thronging?
A soft seat for ourselves, among the blest?

Would these content us now? How then forever?
By seraph and by saint God's will is done:
There is no heaven, save in the soul's endeavor
To do His will, while endless ages run.

Work may be drudgery; it is so only
When we leave God out of the task He gives,

Or choose our own, apart from Him, — a lonely
Treadmill of selfishness, where no joy lives.

Days we recall of dreariest melancholy,
When we sat idle, folding listless hands;
But Duty roused us from that trance of folly,
And Life dawned on us in Love's dear commands.

There must be work for us to do in heaven,
Else that were a less blessèd place than this:
The worthiest impulse to our earth-life given
Must still be felt, amid celestial bliss.

Great voices call to labor. "Lo, my Father
Works, and I work with Him," the Master said:
Are we His servants, then, if we would rather
In easier pathways than He chose, be led?

"Yet heaven is love." Ay, but in heavenly places
Love will mean something more than sitting still
And looking into one another's faces,
To say, "I love you," as earth's fond ones will.

Even here, love wearies of its low expression;
It longs to strike some nobler anthem-chord;
The heart is deadened, finds but retrogression,
In iteration of the sweetest word.

None asks there, "Am I loved?" His heart's outpouring
Falls back like dew from all the heavens on him
Who, laden with God's gifts, moves on adoring,
Mate of archangels and of seraphim.

Work is the holiest thing in earth or heaven:
To lift from souls the sorrow and the curse, —
This dear employment must to us be given,
While there is want in God's great universe.

And might there come at last a termination
Of ills that now bewilder and oppress,
Doubtless there would arise some new creation
To meet the hunger of our hearts to bless.

No blot of sin might sully those fresh pages;
Yet should we feel our souls fledge unguessed powers,
Learning, through flight on flight of timeless ages,
To love God's last-born worlds as He loved ours.

IMMORTAL.

INTO the heaven of Thy heart, O God,
I lift up my life, like a flower;
Thy light is deep, and Thy love is broad,
And I am not the child of an hour.

As a little blossom is fed from the whole
Vast depth of unfathomed air,
Through every fibre of thought my soul
Reaches forth, in Thyself to share.

I dare to say unto Thee, my God,
Who hast made me to climb so high,
That I shall not crumble away with the clod:
I am Thine, and I cannot die!

The throb of Thy infinite life I feel
In every beat of my heart;
Upon me hast Thou set eternity's seal;
Forever alive, as Thou art.

I know not Thy mystery, O my God,
Nor yet what my own life means,
That feels after Thee, through the mould and the sod,
And the darkness that intervenes.

But I know that I live, since I hate the wrong,
The glory of truth can see;
Can cling to the right with a purpose strong,
Can love and can will with Thee.

And I feel Thee through other lives, my God,
That into Thyself have grown,
And are filled with the sweetness of Thine abode,
With the light that is all Thine own.

Because I have known the human heart
And its heavenly tenderness,
I am sure that Thou with Thy children art:
They bless me as Thou dost bless.

Shall I doubt Thy breath which I breathe, my God?
Shall I reason myself into dust?
Thy Word flows fresh through the earth abroad;
My soul unto Thee I trust!

Thou hast entered into humanity,
And hast made it, like Thee, divine;
And the grave and corruption it shall not see,
This Holy One that is Thine!

THE PROOF.

IMPOSSIBLE, — the eagle's flight!
A body lift itself in air?
Yet see, he soars away from sight! —
Can mortals with the immortal share?
To argue it were wordy strife;
Life only is the proof of life.

Duration, circumstances, things, —
These measure not the eternal state:
Ah, cease from thy vain questionings
Whether an after-life await!
Rise thou from self to God, and see
That immortality must be!

BY EDEN-STREAMS.

THERE was a stirring in the trees of heaven,
The reflex of a face upon the stream
Along whose brim I sought the lambs at even,
To lead them home beside its crystal gleam.

This lovely work the dear Lord gave to me;
His lambs — the little children — were my care:
I knew thine eyes; I looked up, and saw thee,
Changed but as I was changed, — for nothing there

Remains to hurt, or chill, or separate,
Where truth alone survives, and heart reads heart:
Thou from afar beyond heaven's outmost gate
Wert bringing back some glorious mission's chart.

To see thee seemed so natural, so sweet!
And, lingering there, we talked of yesterday,
And of the pleasant friends we used to meet,
Working and singing, on the homeward way.

Scarcely it seemed that we had loosened hands,
Since the glad moment when at first we met,
And knew our kinship, 'mid the dim green lands
Of our fair earth, in heaven remembered yet.

Each questioned, "Hast thou lately hither sped?
Younger than yesterday thy face appears."
"Dear deathless ones," a passing angel said,
"Since you left earth, time counts a thousand years."

ELIZABETH.

A WHITE stone glimmers through the firs,
The dry grass on her grave-mound stirs;
  The sunshine scarcely warms the skies;
Pale cloudlets fleck the chilly blue;
The dawn brings frost instead of dew
  To the bleak hillside where she lies.

'T is something to be near the place
Where earth conceals her dear, dead face; —
  But thou, true heart, thou art not there!
Where now thou art beloved and known,
Love makes a climate of its own;
  Perpetual summer in the air.

The language of that neighboring land
Already thou didst understand,
  Already breathe its healthful breath,
Before thy feet its shores had pressed;
There wert thou an awaited guest,
  At home in heaven, Elizabeth!

I try to guess what radiance now
Is resting on that gentle brow,
  Lovelier than shone upon it here;
What heavenly work thou hast begun,
What new, immortal friendships won,
  That make the life unseen so dear.

I cannot think that any change
Could ever thy sweet soul estrange
  From the familiar human ties;
Thou art the same, though inmost heaven
Its wisdom to thy thought has given,
  Its beauty kindled in thine eyes.

The same to us, as warm, as true,
Whatever beautiful or new
  With thy unhindered growth may blend:
Here, as life broadens, love expands;
How must it bloom in those free lands
  Where thou dost walk, belovèd friend!

I do not know what death may mean;
No gates can ever shut between
  True heart and heart, Elizabeth;
'T is but to step from time's rude strife
A little farther into life,
  And there thou art, Elizabeth!

AMESBURY, MASS., December, 1883.

GOD BLESS YOU!

It was but a brief "God bless you!"
  As hand lay in hand, a word
By pilgrim spoken to pilgrim;
  But its hidden promise they heard.

And so close, in that benediction,
  Drew heart unto kindred heart,
Though their feet took opposite pathways,
  They knew that they should not part.

By the truth that they loved and lived for,
  By the work that they meant to share,
They knew they were friends forever:
  They had met, soul with soul, in a prayer.

They said, in that low "God bless you!"
  Whatever one spirit could say
To another, as each departed
  On a separate, untried way.

But because the way is eternal,
  And because no spirit in vain
Can breathe on another God's blessing,
  Those pilgrims will meet again.

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